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Landscapes of Practice: Stories of Teacher Development and Change

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Landscapes of Practice: Stories of Teacher Development and Change

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2010

Acknowledgements

As I reflect on this journey and those people who helped make its destination a success, I thought of my years in high school and the impact of one teacher who made a difference in my life and my eventual college endeavors—Sister Jane, my art teacher. I was not a "natural" talent, but through her mentorship, she helped me "see" and interpret the world through drawing and printmaking. While other teachers saw me as a "less than stellar scholar," Sister Jane saw potential. It was solely due to her attentiveness and caring that I attended college and studied art. Thank you, Sister Jane for seeing in me what others could not.

From that moment forward, I have had the good fortune to share my life with professors, colleagues, and friends who have changed the way I see the world—in particular, my committee chairs, Colleen Fairbanks and Beth Maloch. Like Sister Jane, both Colleen and Beth saw all that I could do rather than my shortcomings. They cared and empowered me to succeed.

To Colleen, my dearest friend and mentor, who engaged in countless conversations about literacy, knowledge, culture, identity, agency, and equity in schooling that opened my eyes to the complex nature of teaching and learning, thank you for challenging me to examine my beliefs and interpretations. Thank you for believing in me when I felt overwhelmed and for pushing me to send you my best writing—no ellipsis, no bullets. In the truest sense, your voice is present throughout these stories.

To Beth, who helped me see the landscape of teaching and all of its challenges through the voices of the teachers, thank you for sharing the role of committee chair with Colleen—coming on board when I needed you the most. Thank you for your encouragement, guidance, and support, making the completion a reality.

To my committee members, Lisa Cary, Diane Schallert, and Jo Worthy, who played a significant role in my evolving understandings of language, literacy, and knowledge, thank you for "interrupting" my thinking and for your smiles. I always sensed your confidence in me through the wonderment and intrigue you expressed.

To Lora, who met me at Starbucks time and time again, listening as I tried to make sense of what I was seeing and hearing, thank you for your thoughtful feedback and your positive response to my work. You helped sustain my energy and confidence.

A special thank you to my family, who encouraged me to complete the task, especially my husband and best friend, "Bud," who patiently waited for me to come down from the "loft" after two years of writing, and to my daughter and son, Emily and Will, who kept saying, "Stay focused, Mom," or gently, when I would call them midday, "Are you writing?" And of course, I must acknowledge my steadfast companions, Meg, Samson, Doc, Tom, and the Twinkies. Thanks to you, I was never alone regardless of the time of day.

And finally, to the teachers, Britney, Sheila, and Bree, who welcomed me into their classrooms and openly shared both their personal and teaching lives with me, thank you for trusting me to tell your stories. Without you, my work and all its rewards would not have been possible.

Landscapes of Practice: Stories of Teacher Development and Change

Publication No._____

Lynn Ashman Masterson, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

Supervisors: Beth Maloch and Colleen M. Fairbanks

The purpose of this study was to explore (1) how teachers build knowledge, (2) the influence of prior beliefs on the ways in which teachers internalize this knowledge, and (3) the degree to which teachers use this new knowledge to facilitate changes in their practice. The use of landscape as a metaphorical representation for this study satisfied two needs. First, this study took place on two fundamentally different landscapes—a summer writing institute where the teachers took the role of learner, and in three teachers' classrooms where they were to enact what they learned. However, in a more abstract sense, these landscapes, considered "exterior" (Lopez, 1995) were also places in which people lived, sharing their thoughts about families, teaching, learning, schools, and children. Thought of as "interior landscapes," (Lopez, 1995) these conversations revealed the dialogic nature of the relationship between the two and made it possible to engage in a Bahktinian analysis of the interplay between internally persuasive and authoritative

discourses voiced in the narratives. Utilizing a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as a methodological base, the study focused on the relationship between professional development and the possibilities for change in each of the teacher's classrooms. The representation of the data consisted of the many stories that took place on the two landscapes of the institute and the classrooms—stories of the teacher, school, district, community, and the state. The findings suggest that strategies alone will not improve the instruction in writing classrooms and that researchers, teacher educators, and those who provide professional development need to rethink the cultural narrative of "change." Consideration must be given to the dialogic interplay among the various discourses, both authoritative and internally persuasive, that live on the interior landscapes of the teachers and the role each plays in the change process. Therefore, professional development settings need to become places where teachers are guided through a process to examine their deeply held assumptions of students, writing curriculum, and what constitutes knowledge.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Prologue

People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi).

Inspired by the narrative dissertations written by Sunstein (1991) and Fairbanks (1992), this is the story of how I came to explore the effectiveness of professional development offerings, as well as the professional development experience from a summer writing institute and the stories of three teachers and their writing classrooms.

Like many of us, I came to teaching through a side door rather than the front door of the College of Education. Interestingly, my teacher story parallels that of Bernadette Lohle, the art teacher featured in Craig's (2006) study of teacher knowledge and curriculum reform. Like Bernadette, I attended an art college that shared a similar vision as the School of Visual Arts she attended. Both of us had plans to make a living as an artist, both of us had owned an art gallery, both of us returned to school for K-12 art certification and taught in a magnet program designed to meet desegregation mandates, and both of us had fought our way through the public's perception that there was little value in educating children in the arts. And while I have never been escorted out of an interview with an assistant superintendent, I, too, have been labeled "outspoken." Our teaching experiences mirrored each other as well, twenty years of classroom teaching followed by a move to a mentor role that positioned us on the "other side," a place seen as outside the circle.

Our professional lives continued to parallel one another when Bernadette's role as the Magnet coordinator under a new principal positioned her as curriculum disseminator rather than a curriculum maker alongside the teachers in her school. This process of creating and disseminating lesson plans without the teachers' input was carried out with the expectation that all the teachers had to do was follow the outline and "they could expect to create the same work products, arrive at the same understanding, and achieve the same test results with their students" (Craig, 2006, p. 275). In a similar fashion, Central ISD, under the direction of a new Director of Curriculum, devised instructional planning guides that laid out the literacy skills in lockstep fashion to ensure equity in the learning experiences across the district. I became both the creator and disseminator of these documents. My recollections of sitting at my computer placing knowledge and skills into boxes, carrying these documents to each middle and high school campus, and then "training" the teachers in how to use the documents ran counter to my beliefs about the best ways to improve teaching and learning. How was this helping teachers become more knowledgeable about teaching writing? I now wish that I had had Bernadette's story to share with my supervisor and colleagues.

In my role as a district secondary literacy specialist, I had many opportunities to observe teachers during writing instruction. At that time the district supported the professional development model offered by a privately owned writing project that was grounded in the work of Emig (1971) and her followers; Murray, Graves, Atwell, Rief, and others. This three-week learning experience taught teachers about the writing process while engaging them in the actual process themselves as they created both narrative and

expository texts. At the time of my study, over two thousand teachers across the district had attended this form of professional development and for some, it was a transformational experience, but for the majority, upon visiting their classrooms the following fall semester there was no visible change in practice. So what was going on here? Did they attend because they had the desire to learn about teaching writing? Because they had heard that it was a cathartic experience? They were being a paid a stipend? It was required for contract renewal? Was the context wrong? Or did the teachers need more in the way of follow-up and support throughout the year? Through this experience I began to explore the possibilities behind the apparent discontinuity between knowledge from the professional development experience and their classroom practice.

In a related experience, my work in the district included campus-based professional development with the teachers in the English departments of both middle and high schools. In addition, I presented district level workshops for the purpose of furthering district initiatives in the teaching of writing. Often the response to suggesting that children have a choice of writing topics or that they form book clubs to discuss stories was often met with the response from teachers, "These children can't," often referring to children of color/low SES, special education, ELL; as opposed to "Those children can," referring to white, middle to upper class, gifted and talented, and enrolled in advanced placement. Intrigued by these statements and motivated to gain an understanding of this phenomena as I worked with teachers in professional development settings, Hillocks' (1999) ideas regarding teacher thinking and knowledge building

helped me begin to make sense of what I had observed. He explored two aspects of teacher thinking in the context of writing classrooms: "their epistemological beliefs about what constitutes significant knowledge in their field, and their deeply held beliefs about the likelihood that their students will be successful in learning to understand what they teach" (p. viii). He contended that teachers operated from one of two epistemological belief systems, objectivist or constructivist, and are either optimists or pessimists. Although Hillocks' theory offers what I would consider an essentialist position that mitigates against the possibility for many belief systems to coexist, it did provide an entry into understanding the assumptions teachers make about their students. For example, a teacher who presented herself as a *constructivist optimist,* believed that what is learned is only learned by drawing on what one already knows and that students have the ability to share in the construction of knowledge. Contrasting this notion is the teacher as *objective pessimist* who believes that knowledge is out there for the taking, but the students are incapable of acquiring the knowledge. An example of such pessimism is represented in the following comment written in an email memo from the department chair in a school that was predominately Latino, to the principal explaining her students' lack of progress in writing:

> We come up with theory after theory and come up with the same ones that don't seem to explain anything: laziness, ADHD, ADD (Excuses), elementary teachers, and so on. My only theory to explain the situation is that it is a real neurological problem. Maybe we should look at the processes that are used to teach people who have had brain damage, strokes, brain injuries, how to think again (Email to the campus principal, Spring, 2004).

When I read this message, I asked myself, "What brought her to this point? Why did she shake her head in a doubting manner at the campus-based and/or district professional development with respect to the teaching of writing? What role did the school or district play? Why did she retreat into this mode? How is it possible to facilitate change when an almost impenetrable discourse of deficit thinking was in place? How do we move the discussion from blame to reflective practice? What kinds of professional development would foster the possibility of facilitating change?

As described, the past several years of my professional life have centered on providing support for teachers in language arts classrooms both as a central office representative who provided district-wide professional development in reading and writing at the secondary level and as a mentor/coach working with campus departments as well as individuals. When I first entered the doctoral program, my work as Co-director of the Heart of Texas Writing Project, a site for the National Writing Project at The University of Texas at Austin focused on developing a community of practice for teachers in the Austin area. The work of the project focused on developing and advancing teacher knowledge about the teaching of reading and writing through various forms of professional development, i.e., four-week summer institutes, teacher research groups, and district-based two-week summer institutes. This work was carried out through a collaborative relationship with local school districts for the purpose of developing successful writers. San Gabriel ISD is one of our partner districts and the site for my inquiry.

My relationship with the teachers in San Gabriel ISD began during the summer of 2004 when Katherine, an eighth-grade language arts teacher at San Gabriel Middle School, and I were both attending the Heart of Texas Writing Project's summer invitational writing institute. Because of our shared interest in creating a summer writing experience for middle school children, we spent the spring of 2005 developing the curriculum for a Young Writers' Camp for sixth-grade students at San Gabriel Middle School. This endeavor was met with great enthusiasm by the principal, parents, and children, and the camp drew fifteen participants who spent two weeks reading, writing, and thinking with us. Katherine and I continued to work together during the 2005-2006 school year as we engaged in a collaborative research study with the then Director of the writing project as well as our university professor. It was through this growing relationship with Katherine that our partnership with the district flourished and enabled us to put forth the proposal for a 2006 two-week summer writing institute titled *San Gabriel Writes 2006*. The idea was met with an overwhelmingly positive response from the Superintendent and the district Language Arts Supervisor. Their ideological as well as financial support for the work of the Heart of Texas Writing Project resulted in the participation of twenty-three literacy teachers ranging from first grade through high school and included one math teacher. Of these participants two were male and twenty-one were female.

The first day of the two-week institute was June 26, 2006. As Co-Director of the writing project, I welcomed the participants, informed them about the work of the Heart of Texas Writing Project and our affiliation with the National Writing Project. After

returning to my seat, I listened to the conversation and the comments made by the teachers regarding what they do and why. I was thinking how their stories provided a window into their beliefs about teaching and learning in general, but more specifically about the teaching and learning of writing. I asked myself, "What will they do with this knowledge? Will their practice change in some way?" I kept thinking about how each of their lived experiences contributed to the way they know the world based on how they were positioned socially, culturally, historically, and linguistically—their whole biography—personal and professional, influenced the decisions they made regarding what knowledge they valued, as well as the way in which they taught reading and writing, thus, my inspiration for my inquiry. As the following story will tell, in the spring of 2007, several teachers from the group expressed an interest in having a four-day follow-up institute. They voiced having tried some of the ideas from the previous summer and now had questions regarding the implementation of the practices they had learned. Due to the district's commitment to improving student writing, they approved the funds for what we named, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*.

Given my interest in the ways in which teachers appropriate and enact new knowledge from the institutes as well as the limited research on the teaching of writing in secondary classrooms, I chose three secondary teachers who had attended both *San Gabriel Writes 2006 and San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, Britney (seventh grade), Sheila (eighth grade), and Bree (tenth and twelfth grade), for my focal cases as I continued my inquiry as a participant/observer in their classrooms during the 2007-2008 school year. The four-day institute, followed by my entry into the teacher's classrooms, afforded me

the opportunity to explore (1) how teachers build knowledge, (2) the influence of prior beliefs on the ways in which teachers internalize this knowledge, and (3) the degree to which teachers use this new knowledge to facilitate changes in their practice.

The theoretical discourses that follow in Chapter One informed my inquiry at the outset of my journey and guided my analysis of the summer writing institute, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* and the classrooms of Britney, Sheila, and Bree. Chapters Two through Five tell the stories of these two distinct landscapes and the multiple voices that spoke through both social and political discourses. Chapter Six is a reflection on what I discovered about teacher learning and those discourses that influenced the degree to which the three teachers included new knowledge in their practice. In addition, Chapter Six is a place where new theoretical discourses emerge as they were discovered along the way. To maintain the narrative voice throughout my writing, I have included the discussion of specific methods in Appendix A.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Discourses

In *Landscape and Narrative*, an essay from *Crossing Open Ground*, Barry Lopez (1989) wrote:

> I think of two landscapes—one outside the self, the other within. The external landscape is the one we see—not only the line and color of the land and its shading at different times of the day, but also its plants and animals in season, its weather, its geology, the record of its climate and evolution…The second landscape I think of is an interior one, a kind of projection within a person of a part of the exterior landscape…the speculations, intuitions, and formal ideas we refer to as "mind" are a set of relationships in the interior landscape (p. 64-65).

The use of landscape as a metaphorical representation for my inquiry satisfied two needs. First, in a literal sense, a landscape refers to places where events occurred, and my inquiry took place on two fundamentally different landscapes—the writing institute where the teachers took the role of learner, and the teachers' classrooms where they were to enact what they learned. However, in a more abstract sense, these landscapes, considered "exterior" for I could describe the settings and the events, were also places in which people lived, sharing their thoughts about families, teaching, learning, schools, and children. Thought of as "interior landscapes," these conversations revealed the dialogic nature of the relationship between the two and made it possible to engage in a Bahktinian analysis of the interplay between internally persuasive and authoritative discourses voiced in the narratives. In a more specific way, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) used the term "professional knowledge landscapes" as they researched how teacher knowledge (interior) is shaped by the context in which teachers work (exterior).

My personal and professional experiences drew me into this exploration of the two landscapes and the use of narrative inquiry as a method to understand the events of both the professional development experience and those that took place in the teachers' classrooms. It is through storytelling and the analysis of narratives used in this study that I explored the teachers' interior landscapes, "influenced by where on earth one goes, what one touches, the patterns one observes in nature, the intricate history of one's life" and how it was affected by the exterior landscape "organized according to principles or laws or tendencies beyond human control" (Lopez, 1989, p. 65-66).

The Role of Narrative in Understanding Teacher Learning

We come to inquiry with views, attitudes, and ways of thinking about inquiry. Crotty (2003) stated, "Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work" (p. 2). These assumptions are shaped by the culture into which we are born, an environment that is shaped by the activities of previous generations, and it is through these relationships that one generation passes on to another the unique practices of the culture forming the foundation for our beliefs and attitudes (Vygotsky, 1978). It is in this context of lived experiences that I believe our *initial* way of knowing, and our epistemological stance, "what it means to know" (Crotty, 2003, p. 10), is rooted. I have long contemplated this notion of epistemology and its inextricable link to the ways in which I know the world and construct reality as well as how I interpret what I am observing. None of us experiences the world in the same way; therefore the way I view the world shapes the way I research the world (Crotty, 2003).

In keeping with my belief that we construct meaning as we engage in the world, my inquiry was grounded in the ideology of constructionism—"the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 2003, p. 42). Complementing the epistemology of constructionism, I framed my inquiry in the theoretical perspective of interpretivism that highlights the idea that language—the way we speak, "shapes what things we see and how we see them, and it is these things, shaped for us by language, that constitute reality for us" (Crotty, 2003, p. 87). An important element in interpretivism is the phenomenological concept of intentionality that posits that meaning is not created; it is constructed through an interaction between object and subject. Intentionality is made visible through a narrative approach because it is dependent upon the collaborative nature of the relationship between researcher and participant for the co-construction of knowledge and the interpretation of data. Therefore, I utilized a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as a methodological base to help me begin to understand this relationship between professional development and the possibilities for change in each of the teacher's classrooms.

Narrative Inquiry and Teacher Stories

> If we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively. For us, life—as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17).

Beginning in the early part of the 1980's and continuing into the present, there has been growing interest in the use of narrative inquiry as a way of knowing and writing about teacher knowledge (Elbaz, 1983, 1991; Elbaz-Luswich, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1996, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1997; & Craig, 1999, 2006). Elbaz (1991) claimed that teacher knowledge is ordered by story and can be best understood in this way, and it is the stories of individual teachers through which we see their knowledge. Studies that employ narrative inquiry as a methodology "show" rather than "tell" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and "begin with the experience that is expressed in lived and told stories" (p. 40) rather than beginning the inquiry in theory and then entering the field looking for confirmation or refutation. Narrative inquirers view people as individuals whose lives shape and are shaped by social and cultural narratives. Consistent with this line of thinking is Schon's (1983) idea of "reflection-in-action" wherein the "researcher in action is not dependent on the categories of established theory, but constructs a new theory of the unique case" (p. 68). Thus, an important contribution of narrative inquiry is the creation of possibilities with respect to the meaning and significance of the research topic (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

While many scholars utilize this approach to inquiry, I drew primarily on the use of narrative as conceived by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Influenced by the work of Dewey (1938) and his philosophy that education, experience, and life are interconnected, as well as the notion that experience is both personal and social, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) spent the last two decades immersed in thinking and rethinking how to best create narrative representations of teaching and learning while questioning the ways in which

teachers "reconstruct their stories to include new ways of teaching" (p. 61). Like Dewey, they believe we are individuals who yearn to be understood as such, but we are also people who live in relation to others in a social context. It is out of these lived experiences with others that new experiences emerge creating a continuum of past, present, and future events that move back and forth between the personal and social. They contend that narrative is the best way to represent and understand experience, given its temporal nature. Geertz (1995) believed that experience is temporal, and each moment of each day-by-day experience on the landscape creates a new context. And it is in these everchanging moments that we live our lives that are "contextualized within a longer-term historical narrative" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19).

I was intrigued by this method of inquiry because it offered readers a place "to imagine their own uses and applications" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). And while I realize that I always carry the identity and positioning of researcher, I became less an authority and more a partner in the inquiry as a participant and an observer in both the institute and the classrooms. The representation of the data consisted of the many stories that took place on the two landscapes of the institute and the classrooms, stories of the teacher, school, district, community, and the state.

Although some scholars have questioned the validity of narrative representations and challenged the notion that any of us has the authority to tell other people's stories (Alvermann, 2002; Denzin, 1997), others such as Craig (1999) recounted her journey in developing the methodology as she told the story of an early research project that led to her conceptualization of knowledge communities created by teachers. These separate

stories along with the responses to them became a source for interpretation and gave voice to tacit aspects of the teacher's knowledge. Rather than acting as an authority and turning teacher knowledge into researcher knowledge, the researcher created a space for both voices to be heard; therefore avoiding colonization of and silencing the teacher as Elbaz (1991) argued:

> …the story is not that which links teacher thought and action, for thought and action are not seen as separate domains to begin with. Rather, the story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense (p. 3).

Teacher Beliefs

Holquist (1990) stated, "I see others as bathed in the light of their whole biography" (p. 37), and it is in this "biography," this narrative of experiences, that I began to understand an individual's formation of beliefs and attitudes. My interest in understanding the connection between beliefs and teachers' practices began early in my doctoral program and continued to guide me as I undertook this inquiry into teacher development and change. Understanding that teachers' beliefs about teaching, the curriculum, and children influence the types of experiences they create in their classrooms was critical to my study.

Over the past two decades research has suggested that teachers' beliefs have an influence on classroom practice and that beliefs about teaching begin to form very early in life and seem to be well established by the time students enter college (Calderhead, 1996; Clark and Peterson, 1986; Pajares, 1992). Lortie (1975) attributed this established belief system to the 12-16 years of contact with teachers and professors before entering

college and then the profession. This "apprenticeship of observation," although limited to a student vantage, provided teachers with a knowledge base of experience that influenced their ways of knowing. Building on Lortie, Pajares (1992) emphasized the importance of thinking about teachers' educational beliefs as connected to broader belief systems and values. He also suggested that teachers' beliefs and values are multidimensional, individual and personal, and socio-historical in nature. Moreover, teacher beliefs can be nested inside wider belief systems and these systems help us interpret life inside a classroom (Nespor, 1987; Calderhead, 1996). Similar to other researchers who study teacher beliefs to understand how these beliefs influence practice, I relied on observations, conversations, and notebook entries from both the writing institute and my three focal teachers' classrooms in order to interpret how these beliefs were evident in their practices.

Squires and Bliss (2004) drew on DeFord's (1979) work on the theoretical orientation of reading teachers as they studied two teachers and their beliefs about the use of literature circles. In extensive interviews, both teachers espoused the belief that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text. This belief was validated for one of the teachers through the observation of authentic texts and the conversations the students engaged in on videotape of her classroom; however, there was a mismatch between the stated beliefs and practice in the second teacher's classroom. Similarly, Duffy (1977) examined teachers' espoused beliefs and classroom behavior and found that limitations placed on them by time, curriculum mandates, resources, and students' abilities may account for the discrepancy between stated beliefs and observed practice.

In another study, Norman and Spencer (2005) drew from narrative methodology and used autobiographies to explore the beliefs of preservice teachers about writing and writing instruction. They incorporated the use of writing autobiographies for two purposes: first, to draw on the students' past experiences to inform the writing methods course content and second, to prompt student reflection on their past experiences for further examination of their beliefs as they moved through the program. These narratives illustrated the "students' views about writing, themselves as writers, and writing instruction" (p. 35). Making implicit knowledge visible to both the course instructor and the preservice teacher resulted in a program that was more effective in meeting the needs of the students as well as fostering a connection between the students' beliefs, research, and practice in regard to writing instruction.

Knowing and Knowledge

With my focus on the degree to which teachers assimilated and appropriated the knowledge from the institute, I had to define what I meant by knowing and knowledge before considering the ways in which we build knowledge. Drawing from Bruner (1985), Shulman, (1987), Grossman (1995), Elbaz (1983), and Clandinin and Connelly (2000), to understand the ways of knowing and teacher knowledge as it related to professional development and the enactment of this knowledge in writing classrooms, I foregrounded the voices of writing teachers as they told their teaching stories that were born out of their "beliefs and their social, cultural, and institutional identities" (Abt-Perkins, 2001, p. 151).

Bruner (1985) distinguished between two modes of thought that differ fundamentally in their procedures for establishing truth, paradigmatic and narrative.

Paradigmatic knowing is characterized by an empirical verification for establishing truth based on a well-reasoned hypothesis. It "seeks explications that are context free and universal" (p. 97) and uses language for the purpose of reducing ambiguity by attempting to say what is meant. In contrast to paradigmatic thought, narrative ways of knowing "seek explications that are context sensitive and particular" (p. 97). Rather than attempting value-free representations common to paradigmatic knowing, narrative knowing is said to be value-laden and uses language that includes metaphors and stories of the real world that potentially mean more than they say, leaving room for interpretation. Although Bruner cautions against ignoring one for the other because people engage in both modes of thought when describing their lived experiences, my inquiry and analysis of the stories that took place in the writing institute as well as the teachers' classrooms considered the many contexts that affected the teachers' practice; therefore I applied Bruner's idea of narrative knowing to my interpretation of the two landscapes. Thinking in terms of narrative knowing provided the opportunity to imagine the many possibilities for interpretation. According to Bruner, the narrative mode of thought is temporal. And similar to Lopez's (1989) portrayal of two landscapes, one exterior the other interior, Bruner described two landscapes, one that embodied action (exterior), the other, consciousness (interior).

To complement Bruner's application of a narrative way of knowing, I turned to Dewey's ideas about knowledge. Believing that "knowledge [is] grounded in action, where each person is not simply a passive consumer…but a participant in it—a creator and user of knowledge" (Fenstermacher & Sanger, 1998, p. 468), Dewey argued against

the notion that knowledge is static and permanent. The creation of knowledge is dependent on the interaction between the person and their experiences. Dewey's ideas about knowledge and the active participation by individuals required in the creation of knowledge, resulted in some dissonance as I considered the topic of teacher knowledge and the ways in which teachers build new knowledge.

Teacher Knowledge

History. Historically, research on teacher knowledge evolved from a behaviorist perspective that explored the relationship of teacher behavior to children's learning during the 1960's to a cognitive lens beginning in the 1970's with the focus on thought processes and the ways in which teachers understood their work (Calderhead, 1996, Grossman, 1995). This shift was marked with an increased emphasis on teachers' thought processes, and this line of inquiry progressed through three distinct stages: 1) teacher decision-making, the connection between thought and action; 2) the expansion of this notion to include "teachers' perceptions, attributions, thinking, judgments, reflections, evaluations, and routines" (Calderhead, 1996, p. 710); and 3) an exploration of the knowledge and beliefs that teachers brought to their practice, the thinking and decision-making that accompanied action.

Regarding what constitutes teacher knowledge, Grossman (1995) wrote that some researchers believed that teachers were best served by learning scientific principles regarding teaching, such as knowledge that is applicable across different contexts such as "wait time," while others subscribed to the belief that teacher knowledge was inherently personal, best understood through teacher stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Elbaz,

1983, 1991; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002) and was not dependent on gaining knowledge from research studies of classroom practices. The distinctions Grossman made and the examples from studies gave credence to Bruner's advice regarding the separation of paradigmatic and narrative knowing. Some would argue that teacher knowledge is best understood when consideration is given to both the knowledge base derived from classroom research as well as the teachers' experiences within the context of the classroom. Thus, this explains the ongoing tension between paradigmatic and narrative ways of knowing and their different claims to knowledge.

Respected as renowned scholar, Shulman's (1987) work in the field of teacher knowledge has been recognized by many as seminal to the understanding of teacher knowledge. Based on his fieldwork, Shulman wrote about how a teacher's professional knowledge transferred to practice. He described a veteran English teacher who operated from a theoretical model that enabled her to orchestrate her instruction in a purposeful way. She engaged the students in thoughtful conversations, creating a space for the students' voices to be heard by other members of the class. Through this experience, the students were able to draw from the literature they studied in a way that helped them reflect on their own lives. This observation moved Shulman to wonder about the teacher's beliefs, understandings, and knowledge that permitted her to teach as she did. At the same time, the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force (1986) called for the professionalization of teaching. Both were in agreement with educational reformers that there was a particular set of skills and understanding that were inherent to teaching, in other words, a "knowledge base." In response, Shulman again posed a set of

questions: “What knowledge base? Is enough known about teaching to support a knowledge base? Isn’t teaching little more than personal style, artful communication, knowing some subject matter, and applying the results of resent research on teaching effectiveness?” (p. 5-6).

Drawing from Fenstermacher’s (1986) view of teaching, Shulman (1987) created the following seven categories of teacher knowledge: content knowledge; general pedagogical knowledge (classroom management); curriculum knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; knowledge of learners; knowledge of educational contexts; and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values. Rather than regarding the categories as individual and exclusive, naming the different types of knowledge created the possibility for conversations about teaching and learning to occur and blurred the boundaries between and among these categories (Petrosky, 1994).

Influenced by Shulman, Grossman (1995) offered a typology of teacher knowledge that included a set of six domains: knowledge of content, which includes subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge; knowledge of learners and learning; knowledge of general pedagogy; knowledge of curriculum; knowledge of context; and knowledge of self. Of particular interest related to my inquiry, I focused on knowledge of content and knowledge of self. Although I consider each domain separately, it is important to think of them without boundaries, for the teacher is continually drawing from each to create the whole teaching and learning experience.

Content Knowledge. Subject matter knowledge is the content of the subject that includes not only the facts of the content, but also how the information is organized.

Calderhead (1996) referenced several studies that explored the nature of teacher's subject matter knowledge across disciplines. In general, these studies found that teachers developed "highly specific content-related areas of knowledge" (p. 716) that they used in teaching. In addition, these studies illustrated the teachers' need to develop a deep understanding of the subject, which included knowledge of numerous concepts and the ways in which these concepts were linked. Teachers who had command of their content developed the ability to discern which topics were central to the discipline, constituted enduring understanding, were transferable, and left other less important topics out of the curriculum (Shulman, 1986, Grossman, 1995). Worth noting is the connection found between years of experience and levels of questions posited by novice science teachers. Novice science teachers asked lower level questions about topics they were less knowledgeable about and higher level questions when they believed they were more knowledgeable.

The body of research available on what constitutes subject matter knowledge in the English/language arts is relatively light and when the topic was the focus of discussion, it centered on knowledge relevant to the teaching of English literature, rather than the teaching of writing. Grossman and Shulman (1994) addressed the nature of knowledge in English and the difficulty in defining English as a subject. They cited Applebee's (1974) reference to the basic skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking and the three basic disciplines of language, literature, and composition while noting that few researchers approach the study of the field as a whole. To simplify the problem, studies tended to focus on one or two aspects of English education as the case

for Shulman and Grossman (1994) who focused on knowledge of literature with a scant mention of writing. With regard to writing, they addressed concern over the relationship between declarative knowledge, such as knowing different writing genres, and procedural knowledge of their own process in creating a piece of writing, and posed the question, "What is the relationship between knowing about writing and knowing how to write?" (p. 8). It is interesting to note that ten years prior to the work of Shulman and Grossman and continuing to the present, studies that looked at writing instruction in classrooms focused on developing teacher knowledge and understanding of writing as a process. They found that by engaging teachers in the process itself, they were able to learn how to teach particular forms of writing while they were experiencing the process of writing (Flower & Hays, 1981; Emig, 1971; Graves, 1975). This knowledge of the processes involved in constructing written text affected the way one teaches writing. Many of the aforementioned scholars were teacher researchers and used narratives as the basis of the claims for the teaching of writing.

Pedagogical content knowledge. For Shulman, the defining difference between teacher knowledge and other forms of professional knowledge is the intersection of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, that is the ability to transform the knowledge of writing into the teaching of writing while adapting the instruction to meet the cultural differences of the students as well as differences in ability.

From this vantage, possessing a deep understanding of content does not necessarily translate into expert teaching. In order to foster understanding of a particular concept or theory, a teacher must "blend content and pedagogy into an understanding of

how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners and presented for instruction"(Shulman, 1987, p. 8). In a writing classroom, process goals are the pedagogical content knowledge. Some forms of this knowledge include: rhetorical devices, transitions, aims and modes, and the ways in which students are guided in the use and purpose of syntax. In addition, this knowledge is made visible through the practices inside the classroom. Is the setting sociocultural in nature whereby the classroom is organized as a workshop in which students have choice, or does the teacher subscribe to a transmission model, assigning topics and engaging in decontextualized grammar practice?

The concept of pedagogical content knowledge is inextricably linked to Elbaz's (1983) notion of practical knowledge, which she defined as, "the knowledge of how to do things" (p. 14). This construct was important to my inquiry because the knowledge that was part of the professional development aimed to improve the way teachers teach writing.

Knowledge of self. Critical to the work of any inquiry that explores the relationship between teacher knowledge, beliefs, and changing practice is Grossman's (1995) addition of "knowledge of self" as one of the categories of teacher knowledge. Based on the work of Elbaz (1983), she defined this domain as the "teachers' awareness of their own values, goals, philosophies, styles, personal characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses as they relate to teaching" (p. 22). Knowledge of self is not theoretical or abstract. It is the result of filtering theoretical knowledge through an existing belief system and is therefore grounded in personal experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987).

Practical knowledge. Within Grossman's (1995) category of knowledge of self is another domain, practical knowledge. It too, grew out of the work of Elbaz (1983) and her study of practical knowledge. In a case study of a high school English teacher, Elbaz (1983) "explored viewing the teacher as an agent, with an active…role shaped by her classroom experience" (p. 21). Through a series of open-ended discussions coupled with classroom observation, Elbaz reflected on the everyday experiences of the work of the teacher and illustrated the ways in which a teacher's personal view of children and English shaped her teaching. She found, for example, that the teacher's experiential knowledge of the students, gained over the course of the year included instructional techniques, classroom management skills, the social structure of the school, the community in which the school is located coupled with her knowledge of child development, learning, and social theory. Elbaz named these kinds of knowledge, "practical" because they were integrated by the individual teacher in terms of personal values and beliefs and were oriented to her practical situation.

Personal practical knowledge. Drawing from the work of Crites (1971) and building on Elbaz (1983), Connelly and Clandinin (1988) adopted the term *personal practical knowledge* and described it as residing in the "teacher's past experiences, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. It is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation" (1988, p. 25). Through their extended time in the field at the Bay Street School, they found that teachers' drew from their past lived experiences to create metaphors for thinking about teaching such as thinking of their classroom as home. These

lived experiences directly influenced the type of classroom environment that was established, one that valued the establishment of relationships between the teacher and students.

As a result of their extended time in the field, Clandinin and Connelly (1986) began to see the connection between the rhythm of schooling and storytelling as they began to use events to exemplify their interpretation of life inside the classroom. Continually drawn to the use of metaphor in their inquiries, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) compared the school to a landscape that "allows us to talk about space, place, and time; one that is professional and one in which knowledge is shared and constructed and utilized" (p. 5).

From the various theories regarding teacher knowledge, it appears as if teachers conduct their teaching lives in constant negotiation between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge and the value attributed to each. Calderhead (1996) described knowledge as "factual propositions and the understandings that inform skillful action" (p. 715); however, he posited that teacher knowledge may take many forms. This complexity has prompted an ongoing debate over what teacher knowledge is, how teacher knowledge is represented, and how this knowledge is related to teacher practice. In addition, Munby et al. (2001) contended that this tension is also characterized by the different approaches to depicting teacher knowledge, the relationship between the research base and the field of teaching, and the conflict that exists within the profession between the value of personal practical knowledge as opposed to subject matter knowledge.

As I studied teachers' narrative lives, I explored the lives they live in the classroom, the beliefs embedded in these lives, and the discourses that influenced their actions. All of these forms of knowledge are necessary to understand what constitutes teacher knowledge and the different forms of knowledge that teachers employ when making decisions about the types of teaching and learning experiences they include in their practice and the ways in which teachers build new knowledge.

Knowledge Building

Within the paradigm of socio-constructivist theory, meaning is constructed through the primary mediating tool of language (Vygotsky, 1978). Providing a time and place such as a summer writing institute for teachers to talk to one another about their beliefs, form interpretations of theory from text, and reflect on current practices in response to new information supports the notion that meaning making "must be an effort in conjunction with other times, other people, other texts. It is never individual" (Hillocks, 1995, p. 8). Rather than the one-day, decontextualized professional development experiences, Hillocks referred to a context that engages teachers in deep learning.

In a study of knowledge building, Chan, Burtis, and Bereiter (1997) distinguished between direct assimilation and knowledge building. This study took place in the context of a high school biology class and examined how individuals experienced conceptual change when confronted with new information. Chan et al. (1997) assessed students' prior knowledge on the topic of evolution and introduced new information that challenged existing beliefs. They distinguished between *direct assimilation*, fitting the

new information into existing understandings; and *knowledge building*, viewing new concepts as something problematic that need explanation. The study demonstrated that conceptual change occurred only when the students attempted to resolve the conflict through small group discussions in which individuals shared their different perspectives, resulting in "trying on" the ideas to see where and how they could fit. "A knowledge building approach to conceptual change emphasized the importance of problem-centered inquiry…that fosters active learning" (p. 35). Rather than knowledge being transmitted, the creation of new knowledge was dependent upon the students talking and thinking about the ideas.

In a different study, Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, and Place (2000) examined teachers learning to teach writing. They drew on activity theory (Cole, 1996) and explored how these teachers developed goals, identified and solved problems, and chose a set of pedagogical tools that informed their practice. The teachers were introduced to the concept of writing workshop in the same university classes, but each preservice teacher implemented the theory in different ways. Students in secondary methods used Atwell's (1987), *In the Middle* as their text while the elementary students used Calkins' (1986), *The Art of Teaching Writing.* Both texts emphasized student ownership. In narrative representations of the data, the researchers described a secondary teacher whose student teaching experience introduced him to the structured formulaic approach to writing authored by Jane Schaeffer. The disconnect between the Atwell's and Schaeffer's approaches prompted much reflection on the part of the teacher as he worked to resolve the conflict of the competing discourses. The study documented a teacher's

change in practice over a three-year period in which he gradually melded the two distinct sources of knowledge (university and school) to develop instructional practices that fit his beliefs.

Whether the knowledge is constructed through teacher education classes or in the form of professional development, the power of established curriculum in the school setting can make it difficult for teachers to reconcile their theoretical knowledge that is built across these settings; however, it is through this interplay of discourses that teachers build knowledge.

Professional Development and the Change Process

One significant way teachers acquire and/or create new content knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge is through professional development. The purpose of such professional development for inservice teachers is to build knowledge in their field by adding to what they already know. It is important to consider the ways that teachers build knowledge in order to develop and create meaningful learning experiences.

Moreover, professional development that leads to a change in practice is more than transmitting knowledge; it is about addressing the ways in which we build knowledge together (Chan, Burtis, & Bereiter, 1997; Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, & Place, 2000; Fairbanks, 2006). Schon (1983) claimed that professional development experiences needed to provide the same learning environment for teachers that we ask teachers to provide for students—learning through reading, talking, thinking, and collaborating.

Considering the ways in which teachers learn, Chin and Benne (1969 cited in Richardson & Placier, 2001) described two approaches to staff development, empirical-rational and normative-reeducative. Empirical-rational is a more traditional approach and is based on the idea that if you show the teacher that a new approach is good, they will act in self-interest to make the change. In this case, someone from outside the school determines what must be implemented based on a set of objectives and learner outcomes. These trainings are usually one day with limited follow up. According to Meyer (1988 cited in Richardson & Placier, 2001), through these empirical-rational forms of professional development, only 15% of teachers who attended implemented the new ideas. Hargreaves (1994) offered the explanation that there was often a mismatch between the new idea and teacher beliefs, and these one day events did not engage the teachers in a sustained discussion about the new ideas; therefore teachers were unlikely to use them in their teaching.

Richardson and Placier (2001) posited that teacher development stood a better chance if it was a district/school-wide initiative. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) argued that it is the professional knowledge context that shapes teaching. They described two landscapes—the classroom and the wider community of the school and district. It was from this wider community that knowledge was being "funneled" for the purpose of changing the lives of teachers and students resulting in teachers feeling as if something was being done to them.

According to Borko and Putnam (1996), any time something new is being presented, it is filtered through an existing belief system, and these beliefs strongly

influence the degree to which the teacher adopts the new practice. Levin (2003) would agree. In her fifteen-year longitudinal case studies, she found that change occurred on two levels: inner dialogue and in dialogue with others. First, the teachers' practice changed when confronted with a need to solve a problem and second, when they believed the student was not the problem. In this instance, they engaged in an internal/metacognitive dialogue about what they knew and what they needed to know to solve the problem. Change also occurred when they observed other teachers who shared the same beliefs and with whom they attended workshops. From the written reflections regarding what influenced the teachers' thoughts and actions, five themes emerged: prior beliefs and values, professional experiences, the context (supportive/nonsupportive colleagues and administrators), personal relationships both in and out of school, and other life circumstances (children, health, changing educational policy). Levin's (2003) work demonstrated the need for a normative-reeducative approach that acts in support of sociocultural constructions of knowledge. In order to effect change, teachers needed to work in collaboration with other teachers, university faculty, and experts in the field for enactment and reflection on the new approaches; and the professional development needed to be connected to the teachers' practice with time given to understand new ideas in relation to current beliefs and practices.

The National Writing Project creates a context in which Levin's (2003) findings are further confirmed. Their model of professional development draws on sociocultural concepts of teacher learning through the formation of teacher researcher groups (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; O'Donnell-Allen, 2001, Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006).

The guiding principle of these research groups is the idea that teachers engage in inquiry that is directly related to their interests. O'Donnell-Allen (2004) emphasized that rather than an "expert" transmitting information to a group of teachers, teachers challenged and built upon one another's ideas as they constructed knowledge together. Moreover, these groups empowered teachers with the belief that they could bring about institutional changes as well. Considering that Lortie (1975) pointed out that most often schools stood a greater chance of changing teachers rather than teachers changing schools, groups such as these were critical for they provided teachers with a place to talk, reflect, and collaborate in order to increase or revise their knowledge—thereby facilitating change in their classrooms as well as their schools.

Another successful model includes the National Writing Project's partnership with districts in which a university faculty and K-12 classroom teacher work together to develop and foster teacher leadership—promoting teacher agency. Operating from the viewpoint that the best teacher of teachers is another teacher, participants in the summer invitational writing institute challenge their beliefs through reflection and discussion of new ideas for the purpose of building knowledge about writing instruction. Upon returning to school, the district calls on these teachers to be mentors and leaders. Through continuity programs that build on the shared knowledge acquired during the summer these "teacher consultants" continue to learn with their colleagues. The creation of a community of practice in this way provides a place for teachers to call their professional home.

Vygotsky and Bakhtin: Analyzing the Landscapes

Grounded in social constructivism, a "theory about knowledge and learning that describes what knowing is and how one comes to know," and conceives of knowledge as "temporary, developmental, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated" (Ball, 2000, p. 230), my study was about the ways in which teachers built knowledge and the degree to which this knowledge transformed their classroom practice. Drawing primarily from both Vygotsky's (1981) concepts of internalization and transformation and Bakhtin's (1981) theory of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse, I analyzed the stories of the writing institute and my three focal teachers.

Vygotsky (1981) theorized that the process of internalizing ideas that transforms actions resides in the discourse of inner speech, the way that we develop the ability to self-regulate our actions through thought. It is also the way in which the act of receiving information changes from an external activity that is social in nature to an internal activity that results in the information becoming one's own. Vygotsky emphasized the double function of language—how it enables human beings to communicate with one another (interpsychological) and how we internalize this communication to mediate intellectual activity (intrapsychological). Bakhtin (1981) referenced this relationship as intermental and intramental. With respect to teachers' knowledge and practice, Ball (2000) examined the literacy histories and reflective writings of preservice and inservice teachers to understand the process of internalization. Her study revealed four levels of the teachers' developing internalization: 1) narratives of their personal literacy experience and challenging of long held perspectives, 2) reflective writing about new theories that

they either embraced or rejected, 3) teacher research that grew out of a need to change, and 4) planning and implementation based on the possibilities for new instructional practices. This resulted in increased agency for the teachers as they moved toward "claiming their own voices—blended voices that give expression to the individual but also echo a diversity of different cultural and historical voices" (Elbaz, 2002).

It was through this notion of blended voices that Bakhtin's (1981) theory of multivoicedness was applied to the teachers' narratives. When one assimilates another's discourse, it becomes an interrelationship between the authoritative discourse and the internally persuasive discourse. In Bakhtin's words, "The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with it's authority already fused to it…Its authority was already acknowledged in the past" (p. 342). Elbaz (2002) claimed that internally persuasive discourse was the discourse associated with individuals and small groups as they talked about their experiences. And Bakhtin (1981) characterized it as a discourse "that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and frequently not even acknowledged in society" (p. 342). Abt-Perkins (1996) drew on Bakhtin's notion of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse as she explored the role of story in the development of teacher beliefs and knowledge. This study of a White, middle class teacher with 20 years experience demonstrated that transformation was dependent upon conversations between competing discourses. Abt-Perkins saw limited change in the practice of the teacher and attributed this phenomena to the teacher's lack of consideration of the ways in which her own culture shaped what she

had learned in her Masters program and how she responded to the students' writing. It was this lack of tension between the internally persuasive discourse of her biography and social history and the challenging authoritative discourse of current teacher education programs that resulted in this type of interaction.

My narrative inquiry drew from both Vygotsky (1981) and Bakhtin (1981) as I analyzed the multivoicedness of the two landscapes. Mine was not a structural analysis of the discourse, but rather an analysis that explored the types of knowledge the teachers privileged and their perceptions of students and how this shaped the classroom experiences they created. I examined the teachers' texts, both spoken and written for actions and interactions that occurred. Within and across the institute and teachers' classroom landscapes, the teachers voiced multiple discourses, which illustrated the simultaneous nature of dialogic interplay. I came to think about these discourses as "social languages" (Wertsch, 1991) that could be either authoritative or persuasive, or both. My use of this term refers to "tendentious languages, languages of authorities, and languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263) and helped frame my thinking about how these social languages influenced the teachers' thoughts, spoken words, and actions.

With regard to my inquiry, the discourse of the professional development that originated in the university presented itself as authoritative; facilitated by individuals who might have been seen as more knowledgeable others, teachers who had advanced training at the university in the teaching of writing and who represented an authoritative, privileged discourse. The curriculum may have also acted as an internally persuasive

discourse during moments when the teachers challenged the texts or when the teachers found the ideas compatible with their understanding of teaching writing. It might appear as if these are two distinct categories; however Bakhtin's (1981) theory that language is dialogic and requires an interplay between the discourses resulting in a continuous renegotiation that yields a voice that is "half someone else's; a voice that "becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with his own intention…" (p. 291). Bakhtin identified this process in which one voice speaks through another as "ventriloquation." Elbaz (2002) stated "teachers are continually mediating between their personal understandings, values, and commitments, and the external requirements of teaching elaborated by policy makers, administrators, parents, and members of the public, all of whom stake claims on the contexted social practice of teaching" (p. 405).

My narrative representation of the events that occurred during *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* and in Britney, Sheila, and Bree's classrooms made this dialogic interplay among discourses visible. The stories that follow shed light on the complex relationship between beliefs, knowledge, teachers' practice, and the sociopolitical context of schools.

Chapter 2: San Gabriel ReWrites 2007

Early in the spring of 2007, I received a call from Katherine, the literacy specialist for San Gabriel ISD who is also one of our teacher consultants for the Heart of Texas Writing Project. With excitement, she relayed the district's commitment to continue its partnership with our writing project. During the summer of 2006, twenty-three teachers attended the two-week summer writing institute, *San Gabriel Writes 2006*. This initial entry into the district was met with an overwhelmingly positive response as many of the teachers returned to their classrooms in the fall eager to enact a different approach to teaching writing. An approach that valued protected writing time, offered students choice of topics, utilized mentor text to teach craft, and provided opportunities for individualized instruction based on the particular needs of the writer (Anderson, 2000; Calkins, 1994; Fletcher, 1996 &1993; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Spandel, 2005).

In an effort to support the teachers during the year following *San Gabriel Writes 2006*, I met with the group on three occasions to discuss topics that addressed looking at student writing, organizing for writing workshop, and using a thematic approach to teaching. Throughout the year, my relationship with this particular group of teachers continued to grow as they welcomed me into their teaching lives. Throughout our time together, the teachers voiced their need to continue learning about writing pedagogy. As a result, they requested a four-day follow-up institute for the explicit purpose of addressing their most pressing needs as teachers of writing. The superintendent and the district Language Arts Supervisor welcomed the idea. Their ideological, as well as financial support, for our work resulted in the participation of twelve literacy teachers ranging

from third grade through high school. In response, Katherine organized a meeting with the teachers for the purpose of generating a list of topics and questions they wanted us to consider as we created the curriculum. We named this event, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*. To distinguish between the two summer writing institutes, I will refer to the first, two-week event as *San Gabriel Writes 2006* and the second, four-day follow-up as *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*. The latter was one source of data for my study.

Consistent with the program model of the National Writing Project that advocates a collaborative, bottom-up rather than a top-down model of professional development, our work built on the shared principles and practices for teachers' professional development by "customizing in-service programs for local schools and providing continuing education and research opportunities for teachers" (http://www.nwp.org) to facilitate the improvement of the teaching of writing in San Gabriel ISD. In addition, we drew from the core principles of the National Writing Project as we subscribe to the following beliefs about effective professional development in writing:

> a) Teachers at every level—from kindergarten through college—are the agents of reform; universities and schools are ideal partners for investing in that reform through professional development.
>
> b) Writing can and should be taught, not just assigned, at every grade level. Professional development programs should provide opportunities for teachers to work together to understand the full spectrum of writing development across grades and across subject areas.
>
> c) Knowledge about the teaching of writing comes from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and experience of writing. Effective professional development programs provide frequent and ongoing opportunities for teachers to write and to examine theory research, and practice together systematically.
>
> d) There is no single right approach to teaching writing; however, some practices

> prove to be more effective than others. A reflective and informed community of practice is in the best position to design and develop comprehensive writing programs.
>
> e) Teachers who are well informed and effective in their practice can be successful teachers of other teachers as well as partners in educational research, development, and implementation. Collectively, teacher-leaders are our greatest resource for educational reform (http://www.nwp.org).

The work of the writing project focuses on developing and advancing teacher knowledge about the teaching of reading and writing through various forms of professional development, i.e. four week invitational summer institutes, teacher research groups, study groups, district-based summer institutes, and so forth. This work is carried out through a collaborative relationship with local school districts for the purpose of developing successful teachers of writing. While there are five core principles of the National Writing Project, the model of teachers teaching teachers is of primary importance. Through the Invitational Summer Writing Institutes at the university, the work to develop teacher expertise begins. Those teachers who participate in the work at the university are referred to as "teacher consultants," and it is these teachers, based on their individual strengths, whom the project utilizes as facilitators of professional development in the partner districts.

The district supported and demonstrated a commitment to these principles, and in May, I began working with the district Language Arts Supervisor and Katherine to consider the list of topics under consideration as well as the grade levels of the participants. The teachers attending *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* represented grade levels third through twelfth; therefore it was important for both an elementary and a secondary teacher consultant to facilitate the learning. My choice of facilitators, Sara, a fourth grade

teacher, and Michelle, a high school English teacher, was guided by my personal knowledge of their work in their classrooms, their knowledge of writing pedagogy, as well as their extensive experience in providing professional development in their districts.

The Facilitators

Sara. I first met Sara in the fall of 2004 during a meeting in her district in which we discussed the possibility of a district/university partnership with the Heart of Texas Writing Project. She was a member of the district advisory board and immediately struck me as a teacher who truly loved teaching her fourth graders. This suburban school district spans an area of two hundred square miles, and includes schools with demographics ranging from predominately economically disadvantaged to affluent. Sara teaches fourth grade at an elementary school comprised of students from an affluent white background, and while this is not congruent with the demographics of the schools in San Gabriel ISD, her enthusiasm for teaching writing and the successes she has had in the classroom draw teachers to her. Sara attended the four-week Summer Invitational Writing Institute of the Heart of Texas Writing Project during the summer of 2005. At the time of this study, she had twenty-eight years of teaching experience.

Sara works to improve her own practice through reading books, articles, and talking with colleagues, and feels comfortable sharing both her successes and challenges while teaching teachers about writing instruction. She often credits the teachers she is teaching for her own learning. Animated, with a high-pitch giggle that is infectious, her presentations are engaging as she often incorporates metaphors to help teachers understand the ideas being presented such as kneading dough to make bread and working

the topic to create a good piece of writing. Although she can stray from the topic for brief moments, these moments create a personal space for both her and the participants and provide moments of laughter and camaraderie. For the past ten years of her teaching career, Sara has been providing professional development within her district and has just recently, since her involvement with the Heart of Texas Writing Project in 2005, begun to move outside her district and work with teachers from across the metropolitan area.

Michelle. My relationship with Michelle grew out the Heart of Texas Writing Project's partnership with her school district as she and I worked together to provide professional development for all secondary teachers in the district for the purpose of advancing a workshop approach to writing instruction. Michelle teaches eleventh grade "on-level," [the district's descriptor], Pre-AP, and Creative Writing in a suburban school district that borders Sara's district. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Michelle has recently become English Department Chair, and at the time of this study had twelve years of teaching experience—seven years in seventh grade language arts, the other five in the high school. Her district has twice as many students as Sara's in half the square miles, but it too, has a diverse population of students. Michelle's high school is culturally diverse but is comprised mostly of students from middle to upper middle class families; however within each of her classes, she has students who struggle economically and/or academically. Like Sara, she attended the four-week Summer Invitational Institute during the summer of 2005. With the increasing demands placed on the English teachers, Michelle works to make each moment of the ninety-minute block a meaningful writing experience for her students. Her curriculum is theme-based while it melds the demands of

state mandates and the AP curriculum within a writing workshop. She takes charge of her own professional growth as she is self-motivated and reflects often on her practice as well as the purpose of schools. Inspired by Carl Glickman's (2003) *Holding Sacred Ground*, in which he discusses the need for an educated citizenry, Michelle generated this overarching question that holds her curriculum together: What is the relationship between the individual and society?

Michelle speaks in such a way that makes it easy to follow her train of thought. She is highly organized, and what she says and the order in which she presents information progresses easily from one idea to another. Her orchestration and time management of activities provides a structured learning environment that I found conducive to learning new ideas and strategies.

The Curriculum and Structure of the Teaching and Learning Moments

In June 2007, Sara, Michelle, and I met at my house and gathered around the dining room table to plan the curriculum for the July 30 – August 2 institute, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*. Within moments the table was filled with stacks of books under consideration for the text. Earlier in the school year, Sara had come across the book *Notebook Know-How* by Aimee Buckner (2005) and had been using many of the strategies with her fourth graders. She thought this text would work well to contextualize the needs of the teachers. Influenced by the work of Lucy Calkins and Ralph Fletcher, Buckner viewed the use of a writer's notebook as the heart of the process and that within its pages a writer thinks in terms of generative writing; expanding topics; using mentor text to study craft; genre study; editing, spelling, punctuation; and assessment—all of

which showed up on the teachers' list of needs. The teachers wanted to learn more about the writers' notebook—how students use them and where students draft—so this book would work well as a unifying text.

In addition to Buckner (2005), we included articles and chapters that provided a theoretical base for the teaching of writing (Bomer, 2005; Buckner, 2005; Dunn & Lindbloom, 2003; Fletcher, 1992 & 2006; Johnston, 2004; Ray, 2006), all of which came from our respective Heart of Texas Writing Project's Summer Institute binders, and drew on the work of published authors such as, Patricia Polacco, Gary Soto, e.e. cummings, Billy Collins, Leonard Pitts, and Elie Wiesel, as well as stories from both their personal and teaching lives to enhance the teachers' experience. Thinking that the teachers might want to further their understanding of writing workshop, grammar in context, and multigenre research, we also provided additional texts for exploration outside the institute setting (Alvarez, 1998; Anderson, 2005; Andrew-Vaughn & Fleischer, 2006; Johannessen, 2003; Patterson, 2001; Paraskevas, 2004; Romano, 1995). We purposely designed the four days to serve as an instructional model for the teachers and structured each day in such a way that Sara and Michelle shared the floor in teaching intervals. Each was responsible for activities they had personally experienced with their own students, and each activity was taught in the way we hoped the teachers would emulate when they returned to their classrooms in late August.

I have come to refer to these activities as "learning opportunities," structured engagements designed to promote active involvement in the strategies as well as conversations about the ideas presented and were characterized by movements in and out

of whole group and small group interactions. Whole group interactions included *lectures*, in which the facilitators spoke directly to the participants with little or no response from the audience; *interactive lectures* that were led by the facilitators and included moments of participant interaction through solicitations from the presenters as well as questions and responses from the participants; *modeling* of strategies in a mini-lesson format in which the participants act independently to write as result of instruction or read in response to a text. Small group interactions consisted of *table conversations, partner share,* or *pairs/triads* in conversation. I have included the daily agenda illustrating how each day was organized in Appendix B.

The daily activities followed what became a somewhat predictable pattern: Each day began with an opening reflection that built on the ideas from the previous day and connected in some way to the teachers' understanding of the strategies and ideas embedded in the curriculum. These ten minutes of thinking and writing time were followed by an opportunity for the teachers to share their responses with one another in a whole group setting and served as a segue into each day's events. Typically, each learning opportunity began with either Sara or Michelle giving information from the Buckner text, modeling one of the strategies, or guiding the teachers as they participated in small group discussions of the theoretical ideas from the ancillary chapters and articles on the teaching of writing. In response, the teachers participated in the activity by generating personal writing, sharing their writing with the whole group or their tablemates, or responding to and talking about the theoretical ideas related to the teaching of writing. Before leaving for the day, Sara or Michelle led the group in a debriefing of

the day's activities followed by the distribution of chapters or articles for homework reading along with an explanation of the reading response activity they were to use during or after reading the text. The curriculum was intended to prompt thoughtful reflections as the teachers engaged in the activities and readings. The reader response prompts invited the teachers to think about the text in relation to their current practice as they considered the possibilities as well as the challenges they faced as writing teachers. At one time, I had considered the curriculum an authoritative discourse, and at times it was. However, given the structure of learning opportunities, the curriculum fostered a more dialogic environment in which the interplay between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses was evident. The 12 teachers who joined us for this experience showed an interest in revising their practice by adding to their existing knowledge of the teaching of writing and whose voices will be heard in the story that follows.

The Story of the Writing Institute Experience

We headed east on the local state highway, a narrow two-lane road lined with pastures, framed in the distance by the trees that hug the banks of the San Gabriel River. The ride from Eastview to San Gabriel is a serene drive through rich farmland. County roads run north and south off of the highway leading to old farmhouses that have been standing since the turn of the century as well as new homes built by those who wish to escape the city, yearning for the quiet landscape of the river valley. Sara, Michelle, and I agreed to meet at my house to make the twenty-mile trip together each morning. It gave us a few moments to prepare for the day ahead. Running through the sequence of events one more time in hopes of ensuring a seamless, well-connected series of activities that, in

the end, would help the teachers orchestrate a workshop approach to writing instruction. For me, I felt the stakes were high. This was not only the first day of a follow-up institute requested by the teachers, but it was also my first day as a researcher in the field collecting data for my dissertation. It was 7:15 a.m.

As we neared the turn on to the state highway leading to San Gabriel, the vegetation grew lush and the trees that overhung the roadway met in the middle forming a canopy providing a cool, damp, shade. San Gabriel, a once quiet farming community, boasts new subdivisions and businesses. This rural community of 17,000 residents markets itself as a "progressive small town" (San Gabriel Chamber of Commerce) in which people can escape the congestion and high prices of the nearby city. Although the city is experiencing fairly rapid growth due to the emphasis on economic development, the school district has remained small. With one primary school, one upper elementary school, one middle school, and one high school, the school district is the second largest employer in the city.

With eager anticipation, we pulled up to the Board Room, an ironic choice for the site of a professional development experience that would challenge the curriculum initiatives of the district. It was in this room that the men and women who hold positions on the school board, as well as the superintendent, decided to subscribe to C-Scope (http://www5.esc13.net/cscope), a packaged curriculum in English that contained teacher scripts and lessons planned without regard to the ways in which the students are positioned culturally, socially, or linguistically. A decision to "bundle" the state standards into six-week packages for emphasis on particular skills coupled with mandated genres of

writing and prompts that mimicked the state assessment found its origin here as well. Like most districts across this south central state, San Gabriel ISD continued to search for the best way to meet the academic needs of its students based on the requirements of the state assessment. And, although it appeared as if the goals of the district and those of the writing project differed, the administration found value in our work.

Arriving forty-five minutes ahead of the teachers gave the three of us plenty of time to arrange the room to meet the instructional needs as well as my needs as the researcher. Sara and Michelle set up their materials at the front of the room with an overhead projector, white board, and easel as they prepared their space facing the group and organized themselves for the day ahead. Handouts of paraphrased strategies from the common text, *Notebook Know-How* by Aimee Buckner (2005); articles from *English Journal*, *Voices in the Middle*, and *Language Arts*; and individual chapters written by notable literacy scholars such as Fletcher (1992, 2006), Romano (1995), and Johnston (2004) lined the front table that sat beneath the white board. I glanced at the clock. It was 8:15 a.m. The first teachers were arriving.

Not surprisingly, the teachers chose their seats according to grade level and school. The elementary teachers chose the table to the left; the high school teachers sat at the middle table while the middle school teachers sat at the table to the right. Dressed casually for the summer heat in t-shirts, shorts, Capri slacks, and sandals, the group of twelve women came together on the first of four days to build on what they had learned the previous summer in the two-week institute, *San Gabriel Writes 2006,* and from the ideas they had tried to incorporate into their practice during the past school year. I

reintroduced myself and then introduced Sara and Michelle. Before we could begin, I addressed my study. I spoke of my research in the context of their experience last summer and told them they had been the inspiration for my current work. “During the first day of last year’s institute, I was struck by the comments you shared in regard to your writing classrooms and what you hoped to learn.” I explained to the group that I was interested in doing a study of the ways in which teachers build knowledge about the teaching of writing, and that I would be videotaping and audio-taping both whole group and small group discussions over the course of the four days. I emphasized they were in no way obligated to participate in the study, and thankfully, they accepted my presence in the group and all twelve provided consent.

Because I needed a baseline documenting the teachers’ current understanding and implementation of writing workshop, I crafted the opening reflection: “What does a typical day in your writing classroom look like? What are you doing? What are your students doing? How is it going?” Sara led the group in this activity and before she could finish reading the questions from the board, Joan, a fifth grade teacher, said in a low voice, “Reading, reading, reading, writing, reading, reading….” Soon the room was quiet. A cell phone rang, but all continued to write. After five minutes, Sara summoned the group to bring their thoughts to a close and continued to say,

> Before we get headstrong into the day, I think this is a very interesting question to start off with. What does your typical writing day look like? And even though it is only a four-day little follow-up, read that in the end to see if…are there changes you want to make? Are there some little modifications?

With her comment referencing "changes" or "modifications" to the teachers' practice, Sara voiced the first of several discourses that would emerge over the four days, the discourse of change, and then continued, "Does anyone want to tell us what your typical day looks like?" And with this invitation, the institute began.

The entries that follow are the reflections of the three teachers whose classrooms I eventually observed in the fall and whose stories I will tell in the following three chapters. These women represented a range of experience and grade levels. At the time of the study, Britney had taught middle school language arts for twelve years and was currently teaching seventh grade. Sheila had thirty years of classroom experience and had been teaching eighth grade reading up until two years prior to attending the summer writing institutes. Bree was the novice teacher. With two years teaching English, San Gabriel High School was her first teaching assignment. Throughout the remaining story of the institute, the voices of Britney, Sheila, and Bree will provide the foundation for understanding the ways in which these particular teachers built knowledge about writing instruction and the discourses that played a role in their learning.

In response to the opening reflection, Britney wrote:[1]

> *Everyday, my students read on a 15 minute timer for their SSR period. After doing the usual "house cleaning" for about 5-7 minutes, I participate in SSR. We then go straight to the lesson of the day and I try to do a timed writing and share 3 times a week. Depending on what our focus is, the class will be engaged in some kind of writing piece for 60-70% of the ~~time~~ year. There are times when I must focus more on reading and writing is moved. For about 6 weeks before the TAKS test, we write much more and review daily. My students tend to avoid writing if it isn't presented as a whole class project or timed. Many love to share their daily*

[1] Throughout the text, the use of italics denotes written entries from Britney, Sheila, and Bree's writers' notebook or any written text such as email correspondences.

> *writings, but they loathe editing and revising. It seems like that phase is the most painful and unorganized with every friggin' TEK in the ~~whol~~ world to master, they are overwhelmed and so am I. I think that the curriculum and the "writing process" ~~do not~~ contradict each other. If I can focus on 3 things for each assignment, I'm doing about ½ of what is expected. The process doesn't feel authentic with the test looming over us. No surprise!* ☹
>
> *However, my students actually did well on the test this year. I'm anticipating a crappy year ahead. You get a good year about every 3-4. My turn was 2006-2007.*

Britney's story began with this initial entry. After numerous visits to her classroom, I realized that her writing accurately described the setting and the events that took place on a daily basis. Teaching seventh grade had its challenges due to the state's testing calendar, which included a writing assessment at this level. There was enormous pressure on the teacher as well as the students during this year, and as evidenced by Britney's words, "with every friggin' TEK in the world to master, they are overwhelmed and so am I." And, although her students performed well last year, she had already deemed the coming year as "crappy" based on her years in the classroom, but also on a narrative that says a teacher only gets a good class every three to four years.

Sheila wrote:

> *Students are hunkered down (eagerly & reluctantly) writing in their composition notebooks. Some are attacking the notebook with zeal and others are lollygagging. Many times I write with them, and this seems to help keep them on task if I participate as well. It usually proceeds smoothly and quietly, especially when it's a free write. I was surprised how many kids really got into writing and looked forward to doing it. Several students wanted to share and, of course, some students never wanted to share. But nearly everyone was interested in what someone had written and was eager to listen. Some very interesting conversations came from their writing, and you were able to see different sides of students that were kept hidden. I was always amazed at what some of them would share with others. Students in this day and age are very bold, and it comes out in their writings. Their writings really helped me to better understand them and what some~~one~~ of them were experiencing in their home lives. Students were also more*

> *receptive about practicing grammar when they could apply it to their own writing. That was a nice change!*

A 30-year veteran teacher, Sheila incorporated the use of a writers' notebook this past school year based on her experience in the two-week institute, *San Gabriel Writes 2006*. Her writing indicated an enthusiasm for the use of notebooks in her classroom as she included daily writing in her curriculum for the first time. However, when I visited Sheila's classroom in the fall following *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, it became apparent that Sheila's perceptions of her students' experiences differed from my observation of her practice especially with regard to her claim of contextualized grammar instruction.

Bree wrote:

> *Writing most often occurs after reading in my class. There is always some type of assignment that compliments whatever piece of lit we've been working on. After explaining the prompt and expectations, I will walk around to help students get started and to answer any lingering questions. However, once students are "into" their writing, I usually sit at my desk or podium and just watch. Most of my kids will continue to write on their own without a lot of help or prompting. (They are well trained). If an assignment is due at the end of class its no more than a pg. or 2 long. That's really why my kids stay as focused as they do—they want to get it done! I'm okay with this (although I wish they cared a little more) b/c we talk at the beginning of the year about 1st drafts being the "shitty" draft. (I love Bird by Bird) Yes I actually say "shitty" in my class, but only b/c I want to stay true to written word—he he he.*
>
> *Occasionally my kids get off task, especially as we near the end of our time together. Apparently 10 till means "pack up your stuff" in high school-ese. I really like to stop at this point and ask questions about how its going. Sometimes I get great responses; sometimes it even sparks mini debates among students. But more often than not I get blank stares or the tops of heads, which I have come to learn is "Just let us turn in the stupid papers and have free time, Miss," in high school-ese.*

Bree's entry helped me envision the landscape of her classroom—a high school English classroom that placed reading literature at the center and engaged the students in writing

as a response mechanism. She seemed to regard the students' unenthusiastic behavior as if this was typical of high school students and the way they interacted in the classroom. As Bree's story will later example, there was little revision of these first drafts: however, there was little indication that Bree saw this as a need.

These initial reflections provided the first of many opportunities for the teachers to think about the types of learning experiences they created for their students as the events of the writing institute helped bridge the divide between the landscape of the classroom that the teachers share with students and that of the professional knowledge landscape of the institute (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996). It was also the first time I heard the frustrated voice of Britney when she referred to the state curriculum as "every friggin TEK;" Sheila's happy, excited voice as she described the addition of notebooks to her classroom practice last school year; and the seemingly complacent, yet confident voice of Bree as she referred to her students' language as "high school-ese."

The Discourses of the Institute and Their Dialogic Relationship

It became apparent from the talk that framed the learning opportunities in the institute that the written reflections and conversations represented more than a mere exchange of ideas. Embedded in this talk were multiple voices that spoke through the lived experiences of both facilitators and participants. As the first day continued, and the events of the remaining three days unfolded, it became evident that this professional development event was a story of stories. There was the story that told the events of the writing institute, and as the story developed, the multiple voices that resided inside this story originated from theoretical and social discourses. On one level, the discourses of

personal practical knowledge and *lived experiences* helped me understand how the teachers learned from each other as they constructed knowledge about the teaching of writing. However, the discourses of *high stakes testing, deficit thinking,* and *change* were nested within these discourses. This relationship illustrated the dialogic tension between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses (Bakhtin, 1981). By listening to the voices and analyzing the interplay between and among these discourses, I began to understand how the teachers built knowledge and the choices they made about using the strategies they had learned following their participation in the writing institute.

As just noted, a number of often competing discourses were voiced within the institute. Drawing on the use of "landscape" as a metaphorical representation of the setting (Lopez, 1989; Clandinin and Connelly, 1995) helped me think about this event as a theoretical meeting place for these discourses. Whether authoritative or internally persuasive, the discourses were influenced by events in school, outside of school, and the personal lived experiences of the teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The teachers who inhabited the professional knowledge landscape of the writing institute formed a "knowledge community…[1]that was not only knowledge-using and knowledge-sharing places on the landscape, but knowledge-creating places as well" (Craig, 1999, p. 400).

The discourses of personal practical knowledge and lived experience. In offering the learning opportunities that framed the writing institute, both Sara and Michelle told stories of their teaching life in order to connect with the participants and to help them make sense of the ideas. According to Elbaz (1983),

[1] The use of ellipsis within quotations indicates omitted words.

> Teaching stories are in part personal stories shaped by the knowledge, values, feelings, and purposes of the individual teacher. They are also collective stories shaped by the traditions of schooling in the setting where the teacher works, the social, cultural, and historical context with which the stories are lived out…(p. 405).

In the same way that a reader comes to a text to make meaning by making personal connections, asking questions, and visualizing, Sara and Michelle drew from the same resources when teaching other teachers. And, in response to the content of the institute, the teachers did the same. I began to associate these responses with Rosenblatt's (1938) theory of transaction and the ways in which our personal experiences influence our interpretation and subsequent meaning-making. Often, I heard myself say, "In my classroom…" or "When my kids did...," and the same voice could be heard during the institute. Because the curriculum represented those activities that were significant to Michelle, Sara, or me, personal stories and teaching stories dominated the talk within each learning opportunity. Every activity was based on strategies that both facilitators had used in their classrooms and had found success in after many years of reflection and refinement; therefore, one story of the writing institute illustrated how Sara and Michelle drew primarily from their personal practical knowledge of writing instruction coupled with their personal lived experiences to engage the teachers in knowledge building.

Concurrently, there was either a connection or lack of connection to the topic for the teachers, as they, too, drew from their personal practical knowledge and personal lived experiences as they listened to, read about, and eventually spoke with each other regarding the ideas that formed the curriculum. To add to the complex nature of the dialogic interaction, Sara, Michelle and the teachers, were influenced by the societal

discourse of deficit thinking and the socio-political discourse of high-stakes testing. The language from these broader discourses was heard through the voices of both facilitators and teachers and highlighted the interplay of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses as the teachers related personal stories and practical knowledge to the theoretical ideas of the writing institute. In keeping with Bakhtin's (1986) dialogic nature of voice—that all words 'echo' the voices of others (p. 93), the discourses of *personal practical knowledge* and *lived experiences* echoed many voices: the voices of parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends who spoke in the stories of their growing up; the voices of elementary, secondary, and college teachers who presented themselves in the stories of their schooling; and the voices of their teacher preparation professors, district administrators, national and state government entities, and campus colleagues who were evident in their teaching stories.

The facilitators. Over the four days of the institute, the landscape changed frequently to accommodate a variety of activities that provided opportunities for the teachers to add to their knowledge of writing instruction. Throughout the institute, both Sara and Michelle modeled writing strategies relying on their personal teaching experiences and telling stories about their classrooms. The following descriptions of the ways in which Sara, Michelle, and the teachers who participated drew from their personal practical knowledge of teaching as well as their lived experiences with family and friends illustrate the teaching/learning interactions and work to contextualize the knowledge building process.

*Sara***.** While describing Buckner's (2005) use of a table of contents as a way to

organize the notebook, Sara told the group that she had tried using this strategy and said, "It almost drove me to drink with nine-year-olds," so she revised the idea to meet her needs as well as the needs of her students. She related the sequence of events starting with how she used the notebook before reading Buckner (2005), followed by her strict adherence to Buckner's strategy, and ended with how she revised Buckner to fit her class. From Sara's story, the teachers learned how she reflected on her practice and acted with agency to make the necessary changes that ensured success. Throughout the institute Sara and Michelle made visible their reflective processes to show the transformation in their own teaching as they worked to share and build knowledge with the participants.

Later, while modeling how to "expand an idea" using a strategy from the Buckner (2005) text that she renamed "Museum Exhibit," Sara took the teachers through the process as if they were sitting in her fourth grade classroom. She explicitly stated her purpose for learning the strategy, took the teachers back into the Buckner text to show where they could find the description of the strategy, and prompted the teachers to use their writer's notebook as her fourth graders use them—writing the explanation of the strategy in the back of their notebooks. Sara began:

> We're going to teach you a strategy for expanding a topic, which is exactly what my kids, and I think all of yours, they don't write enough effectively…It's on page 49, and it's called *Expanding Topic Strategy—Favorite Collection*...right now I want you to go to the back, flip your book, and I want you write this strategy, "Museum." We're expanding the topic under it, "Museum Exhibit." Now if you were in my classroom, I would have you give me the name of a famous person, but see the kids now, they would choose a singer or someone that I wouldn't know anything about so and you know, and I try to keep it away from politics like George Bush you know…

Sara continued her lesson using Arnold Schwarzenegger as the person for the exhibit. "Okay, so we're going to write Arnold and we're just not going to write 'Schwarzenegger' because I can't spell it. Now if we were to go to a museum and there was an exhibit for Arnold Schwarzenegger, what would be there?" She began by answering her own question and said, "Probably that leather jacket that he wore in Terminator, so let's write down leather jacket to Terminator." The teachers enthusiastically participated calling out "movie—a DVD, "I'll be back," and loin cloth. She reminded the teachers to be specific and posed the question, "Wasn't he a body builder? So we need Mr. Universe." Guiding the teachers through the process, Sara reminded them that they would return to their own writing to practice the strategy.

> Now I think we could, by doing expanding the topic, which is what this mini-lesson is, we could probably write, you know, about Arnold Schwarzenegger. Now you have this wealth of information, and we weren't near done. You know we could have kept going and going and going, but now we're going to go back to the pattern. Think about your son, think about that pattern that you find that you write a lot about and now let's go back to the entry section of our notebook because this was just learning the strategy. This is kind of how I teach…Now I'm going to show you what I would do.

Over the course of the four days, Sara engaged the teachers in a similar way. She spoke to them using the same language she used with her fourth graders as the teachers participated in the activity. In addition to this interaction pattern, Sara told stories about her family, her grandfather in particular, as she modeled the application of the strategies to her personal writing. Sara modeled the "Museum Exhibit" strategy as she told the following story about her grandfather while creating his exhibit. Holding up artifacts, she began:

> You know I always say I write about my grandfather. Well, see my grandfather was a Baptist preacher, and he was kicked out of several small East Texas churches because they said he was too flamboyant, and I will show you. I love my grandfather. I danced. He taught me how to dance in ostrich skin boots…I can smell him. I can smell him. I can smell his, you know, cologne. And then, and this has just fallen to pieces now, but these are the things that I would put in a museum. This is his Baptist hymnal. The old rugged cross. You know, just the beautiful songs in this one and actually the one that came from his church… *How Firm the Foundation*. I think that's the only one that my grandfather knew I think by heart. This is what would be in the exhibit of grandpa. All these, you know, things and all these, you know, worn pages, and but I also would have a lot of photographs, and I could show his dogs.

She continued the lesson relaying how this strategy helped her students add detail to their writing and then directed the teachers to think about their topic and the artifacts that would be in their exhibit.

Not only did I learn about Sara's teaching and the way she draws from her personal practical knowledge to model her interaction with students, but I also learned about the important role that Sara's grandfather's voice played in her growing up and how it continued to guide her today during the institute. So, in regard to the effectiveness of professional development, it became important to consider the lived experiences of the facilitator as well as those of the participants when planning.

Michelle. Like Sara, Michelle told stories that contextualized and gave meaning to the activities she shared with the group. She led the group through an activity she titled, *Eavesdropping*, that in her words "is intended to awaken the listening skills" of her students. Relying on a personal teaching experience, Michelle told a story about the origin for this activity in her classroom:

> One of the students I had a couple of years ago…she had all these lines in the back of her notebook, and I was reading through them because she wanted me to

> use them for some of the prompts, you know, starters for the next day, and they were really cool, and then I realized it was because they were all from our classroom. She had been writing down all the kooky things people were saying over the course of three months.

The group laughed as Michelle continued her story.

> I started looking through them and she had them from other classes, from lunch, and she had all these great lines which explained to me why her dialogue was so strong in stories because she really just paid attention to the way people talked. So I don't know about ya'll, but I've had a hard time with kids before with dialogue—getting them to accurately…they think that whenever we are writing personal narratives that I want them to actually remember exactly what was said…

Michelle's recounting of this event illustrated for the teachers the type of relationships and conversations she had with her high school students. Michelle's ability to name the student's strength as a writer, as well as her confidence to use the student's writing as a resource for an idea, offered the teachers a possible model for thinking about their own practice. In addition, Michelle engaged the teachers when she said, "I don't know about ya'll, but I've had a hard time with kids before with dialogue." Both Sara and Michelle made allusions to a shared knowledge of classroom experiences and this often prompted responses from the participants. I noticed that Britney listened intently and at this point made a connection to her own experience and said, "They won't write unless they can recall exactly…" Michelle interrupted Britney's contribution and said:

> Exactly. And I tell them this is where the fiction can come in for you. How do they normally talk? What would they say? You don't have to remember what happened four years ago. So getting them to listen helps with that skill, and that is what we are going to do today.

After narrating her story, Michelle made a direct connection to Buckner's text, and explicitly stated, "This is like *Writing off Literature* found on page 24. I'm going to

do it today like I do with my students except I have brought in the four pieces of text…" Like Sara, Michelle used the same language she used with her high school students and took the teachers through the process of jotting down interesting lines of text while listening to different texts read aloud. During this instructional sequence, Michelle took the teachers into Chapter Two of the Buckner text, and in addition to locating the activity in the text, she taught the teachers how the text was structured. Holding the book open, so the teachers could see the pages in the text, Michelle continued,

> And as I said before, this connects to the Writing off Literature strategy…the cool thing about this book that you will quickly recognize, is that once she gives you information about it, she caps it off with like a little 'one, two, three' and it's the 'how, why, and extensions.' So when you want to recreate this in your own room, you can refer back to this little gray area and her suggestion is that, you know, you've just already been telling stories, sharing stories and then you can go back to what you have already read aloud to practice this with them. That would be particularly helpful for younger students. The way I launch it is with a read around.

Afterward, Michelle debriefed the strategy and offered the example of being in a restaurant and overhearing a conversation from another table. She recounted another story about one of her students who had been in this situation and actually wrote down some of the dialogue, which became the centerpiece for a short story. "There is good material all around," Michelle said with a smile, yet jokingly cautioned the teachers about being discreet.

Michelle's teaching was influenced by her lived experiences as well. She has an affinity for collecting, and as she made the connection between collecting things with collecting language, she recounted a memory of her dad and son. "My dad actually sells sports memorabilia and the man knows endless amounts about sports…you know he's

always telling me great stuff about sports." As a result of her dad's collecting memorabilia, her son collected sports cards, and she found value in the reading demand of this particular genre and then commented, "So it makes sense to me now that I know more about collecting…I do collect a lot of things but some are purposeful and some of them are not purposeful." It was moments like these that gave the teachers a glimpse into Michelle's personal life and provided a way for the group to begin building a community as they shared both their teacher stories and family stories.

With respect to knowledge building and the ways in which Sara and Michelle led the group of teachers through the activities, the dominant and important role of storytelling emerged. I had a sense from my own experiences, as well as from the facilitators' performance, that drawing from personal experiences was a way to help others visualize and relate to a topic. Therefore, the stories helped build an understanding of an idea, themselves, and others.

***The participants*.** The teaching and learning moments in the institute also afforded the teachers many opportunities to narrate both their personal lived experiences as well as their teaching lives. In contrast to the facilitators who were orchestrating the instruction, the teachers reacted to the content through written responses as well as small and large group conversations. The stories they told in response to the readings and activities provided a window into the ways in which their lived experiences, both personal and professional, affected the possibility for the curriculum to become persuasive. The following examples feature my three case study teachers, Britney, Sheila, and Bree.

On the first day of the institute Sara read *The Bee Tree* by Patricia Polacco as a generative writing activity. After she completed the story, Sara asked the teachers to write about a time they chased something. Through these personal stories, the teachers learned about one another. Not just who they are as teachers, but who they are outside their teaching life. Although, neither Britney, Sheila, nor Bree shared with the whole group, their notebook entries provided a glimpse into the way they see the world and the potential influences on their classroom practice. Both of which will be elaborated in the case studies that follow this chapter.

Britney wrote:

The Chase

> *I think my whole life has been a chase. I'm always looking ahead, trying to keep up. We have chased material possessions—"keeping up with the Jones's." I'm sick of chasing the newest fad, the biggest TV, the car to have right now. It has stressed me so much that I can't even breath. Even when my children were little, we chased the next stage—sleep thru the night (hey, I think I would still chase after that), ~~walk, sit~~, sit-up, walk, "I can't wait to be out of diapers" (well, that's a (+) too). I haven't savored anything in my life because I'm always chasing after more. I want to drop out of the race. I'm sick of sleepless nights, overwhelming dread, regrets from the past. I'm tired of searching for the "next best thing." I want to simplify, disengage, de-clutter. I want the freedom to stand still and know I have enough—more than enough. I'm sick of toys, gadgets, fast-fixes, spend now—pay later crap! I'm sick of beating my head against the same brick wall, that gets higher and higher. I want to knock the wall down and "see ~~our~~ my future! Do with what you have—the gorilla needs to get off my back!*

In this response, Britney appeared to be at a crisis point in her personal life as she reassessed what was important to her. Her words voiced the stress she was experiencing and left me thinking that she was at turning point in her life. This same voice was heard throughout the writing institute, as she talked about her students and the life of a seventh

grade teacher in a high stakes testing environment. Britney's words provided insight into how her lived experiences may have influenced her knowledge building and the degree to which she eventually acted on that knowledge. During my time in her classroom the following school year, it was evident that Britney's unsettled feelings about her personal life carried over into her teaching life and played a significant role in the ways in which she viewed her students and the possibility for change.

Sheila, who usually projected her witty, upbeat self to the world, wrote this entry:

> *I use to have the same dream quite often. It probably occurred once every other month but in the last year I have been free of it. It's always the same. There are men who have paper bags over their heads, and there is some kind of face drawn on the bag. These men continually chase me around what use to be the Snak Shack, a local hangout for teenagers in my hometown. The men seem to run from everywhere to catch me and sometimes they come extremely close. After these dreams I'm always so tired and exhausted. I feel certain the men in the dreams want to hurt/rape me, and I wake up terrified. I hope this dream has finally stopped forever!*

Sheila's entry intrigued me, so I emailed her and asked, "I am wondering what your thoughts were on the origin of the dream. And if it has reoccurred?" Sheila replied:

> *I haven't had anymore of that same dream about men chasing me with paper bags on their heads. Maybe it is gone for good. I'm not sure why I dreamed it, but men have never been my favorite people. My dad was a terrible role model, and after being told many things in life, I have problems with men being the rulers of the universe and in charge. Most men to me seem manipulative and they act like they are so sure of themselves when in fact they really are weak and inferior to women in many ways. I guess my true colors are coming out! I guess I got this "male" thing in my head early, and I just try to control it rather than go after men like a dog after a bone.*

At the time, I was unaware of how her personal experience influenced her practice. However, during one of my visits to Sheila's classroom, she again referenced her feelings about men as she spoke about her relationship with her father. I found it interesting that

she realized she needed to control her feelings about men, and in my story about Sheila in Chapter Four, she references how she had to work to control these feelings while interacting with the boys in her class. Her recounting of her dream and her explanation are an example of how one teacher's lived experiences influenced her classroom practice.

During the small group conversation about the two chapters in *Boy Writers*: *Reclaiming their Voices* by Fletcher (2006), Sheila's group spent most of the time talking about students in general, and at the end of the conversation, the talk turned to classroom behavior. Sheila said, "I don't care where you live or what color you are, you're still going to have to behave. I don't care. The philosophy of our school is a lot different."

Mandy, a member of her group replied, "Where you come from is very important." To which Sheila responded:

> It's interesting where you come from. Yes, but when you get to school, I'm good to you, and I can't help where you come from, but to make excuses constantly, he's allowed to act this way because you don't know where he's from. I had a boy tell me, I didn't come from such a perfect world that you lived in so don't be coming down on me. Well that's when I slam them with an alcoholic father and by the time I'm done, I'm like, now you've got anything else you want to tell me? Welcome to my world.

Sheila's conversation with this student helped me understand the no-nonsense attitude that I saw in her classroom. Her lived experiences directly influenced the way she thought about her students and the behavioral expectations she had for them in her classroom. For Sheila, home is home and school is school.

Bree wrote:

> *I did not run after the thing I chased, for running in high heels and a skirt is always a recipe for trouble when one is clumsy like me. I walked after my goal. All I ever took were 2 or 3 small steps right, and 1 or 2 small steps forward. I*

> *went to Tyler, Tenaha, Galveston, Fort Worth, and Dallas, but all I ever took were those few small steps.*
>
> *The thing I was chasing, my goal, was a way to pay for college. My family didn't have the money to pay for 4 years worth of school, but we made too much money to receive government grants. This is the dilemma that often falls on middle-middle class families. And since my mother refused to have her daughter stuck w/ a 30,000 loan right out of college, it was up to me & my ability to earn scholarships. I was always an above average student, but I knew I wouldn't make it into the top 10% of my graduating class; I missed it by 2 people and 3 grade points. (Stupid freshman geometry!) So I had to find another way to earn that money. I've always been good at talking too much, (in fact, to all my former teachers, I'm sorry!) so I decided to use my strengths. I became involved in Speaker's Tournament…*

Through an email, I asked Bree to tell me about Speaker's Tournament and how she won the money. She replied:

> *Speakers Tournament is a contest held by the BGCT (Baptist General Convention of Texas). It is sort of a follow up competition to Bible Drill. The idea is that high school students put their knowledge of the Bible to practical use. I had to choose a topic from a list of twenty… I would usually start writing a speech in the late fall, and would have it revised, tweaked, edited, and memorized by early January… Scholarships from different universities (UMHB, ETBU, Hardin-Simmons, etc.) were awarded to the first, second and third place state winners. My senior year of high school, I really wanted to attend the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. But it is a private school, and therefore REALLY expensive…UMHB offered a nice 4-year scholarship to the first place winner. To make a long story short, I went to state and won first place, enabling me to attend UMHB, which is where my degree is from.*

Bree's entry illustrated her determination to succeed. During high school she was goal-oriented and motivated. Her words provided insight into the type of student she was as well as her upbringing and the important role of her faith in her life. In addition, her entry foreshadows the story I will tell about her classroom practice and the ways in which she constructs her ideas of students, the expectations of those who were in her "regular" [a

term used by the district] English classes in contrast to those students who are in her PreAP and AP classes.

For homework on the second day of the institute, the teachers read, *Revitalizing Grammar*, an article by Dunn and Lindblom (2003). In the conversation the following morning, Bree took a stand against the authors' position stated in the excerpt below regarding the importance of recognizing the vernacular of African-American students:

> Some may say: Students need grammar rules to learn Standard English.
> We say: Teachers need to learn the rule-bound grammars of students' home languages.
>
> As Geneva Smitherman explains, studies show that when students who speak African American Vernacular English discuss in class the rule-bound, systematic nature of their own language, they are more amenable to learning "Standard English"—and they do learn it. On the other hand, if they are simply drilled on handbook English, with their own language implicitly dismissed as rule-breaking slang, they tend not to learn what their teachers want them to (Dunn and Lindblom, 2003, p. 46).

Bree took issue with the notion of valuing the home vernacular of their students and said, "Does that mean that I have East Texas Caucasian Vernacular English? I mean…they're taking it a bit too far. Students need to know grammar rules to learn Standard English." She continued by quoting the text, "Teachers need to learn rule bound grammar of students' home language," and replied:

> To an extent, yeah. Maybe you need to understand where they're coming from, but that's only truly slang. Instead of that where they're coming from, their home language is in MTV. You know it, and I understand that that's what they're inundated with. That is in a way their culture, but does that mean that I should praise them for that. So when they call each other bitches and hoes, should I praise them for that too because that's part of their standard vernacular? I didn't agree with that, and then I thought am I being fascist or racist or…

Bree's comment illustrated her apparent language bias toward using "correct" grammar as conceived by English handbooks. But it was through the following story that I came to think about the importance of considering the ways in which participants in professional development events are positioned culturally, socially, and linguistically. The article cited a Dear Abby column in which the writer and Abby made known their pet peeves regarding the use of incorrect grammar such as the difference between *lie* and *lay* and the common use of the word *irregardless.* Bree responded, "I know there are people out there who do that, and sometimes I do that, but on the other hand I felt like they lumped all us who wish for correct grammar into what they call "Abby and her ilk." And she continued to justify her position as she told about her mother's emphasis on speaking correctly:

> Yea, I don't know that I'd write a Dear Abby letter about it, but you know, I guess maybe, and you could probably understand this coming from East Texas. There is such a stigma about people from East Texas because we talk with such a heavy accent, and people in general from Texas think we're stupid you know…that we don't know a whole lot because we don't speak well, and so I was taught by my mother who didn't come from East Texas. "No, you don't say 'ain't going to wash my clothes,'" you know. You would say something different and you speak correctly, and so I'm really conscious of it—to watch out for it.

Bree's story illustrated the multivoicedness of the institute as she ventriloquated the authoritative voice of her mother. As Bree made sense of the ideas presented in the text, she made the dialogic interaction visible when she said, "To an extent, yeah, but…" It seems apparent that her beliefs about grammar instruction were neither fully persuasive nor was the text authoritative. In addition, it was through Bree's narrated experiences of growing up that the importance she placed on direct grammar instruction and the way she

organized her classroom for writing instruction were influenced by the discourses of her upbringing.

It was through the voices of the teachers that the interplay of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses manifested itself as the teachers related their personal stories and practical knowledge to the theoretical ideas presented in the writing institute. Expressed most often in their small group discussions, their personal and professional experiences appeared to play a significant role in the value they attributed to each learning opportunity and the possibility for the inclusion of the activity or strategy in their practice.

The discourse of deficit thinking. Throughout the institute, the teachers' talk was laden with deficit language with respect to their students' experiences and abilities. The internally persuasive discourse of deficit thinking, rooted in the societal discourses related to the beliefs about individuals based on social, cultural, and linguistic assumptions, had a negative impact on the teachers' learning. In particular, the teachers' beliefs about their students' abilities coupled with insufficient knowledge of their students lived experiences, pervaded many of the conversations and influenced the types of learning experiences they created in their classrooms following the institute.

Valencia (1997) characterized deficit thinking as "an endogenous theory—positing that the student who fails in school does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies" (p. 2). Rather than looking at external factors such as the ways in which schools are organized, the inequities in opportunities created by institutional racism, or the oppressive nature of teaching through transmission (Freire, 1971), educators blame

the student for their poor achievement as well as their inability to participate in teaching and learning structures such as writing workshop. Over the course of ten years, as I worked with both inservice and preservice teachers, the phrase, "These kids can't" referencing children from low SES families, English Language Learners, and children of color, dominated many of our conversations. Drawing from Ryan's (1971) book, *Blaming the Victim*, Valencia (1997) described this ideological base of deficit thinking as "the more powerful blame the innocent" (p. 3).

Late on the first day of the institute, during the small group discussion of the poet Galbrath's collections in which he talked about his typewriter collection, Britney's deficit view of her students emerged. Kelly, a member of Britney's group, was reminded of her dad as she said, "My father used to teach typing, and he started out in an old junior high…I used to go there after school…I would play on those typewriters for hours." In response, Britney relayed her feelings about her seventh graders and said:

> Well, you know what? And this is something else that I've said about our kids that we have now because you know we're always complaining about them because it's so easy…they have these machines that will do everything, but it takes you five and a half days to type one page…
>
> Have you ever had yours where they type everything, and then they come and they want you to look at it, you know, get it revised and go through the thing and you go, 'Okay, now go back and make those changes,' and they go, 'You mean I have to type it again?' And you're like, 'Have you lost your mind? Why would you type it again?' 'Were we supposed to save it?' I mean they don't…bother to save it because they're thoughtless.

In this conversation, Britney blamed the students for their inability to use the computer in a way that she thought was logical and within the students' capabilities. There was no evidence that she looked at herself or her teaching as a way to rethink how she used the

computer lab. Her last comment, "because they're thoughtless," illustrated Britney's beliefs about her students and an interpretation that it would not be easy for her to include ideas from the institute in her practice if she indeed felt this way.

On the morning of the third day, Bree's conversation that began in response to the grammar article, *Revitalizing Grammar*, by Dunn and Lindblom (2003) shifted from the topic of grammar to a comparison of the student population at San Gabriel High School to other, more affluent high schools in the Central Texas area. Bree made the final comment:

> But you know we were talking about how a lot of our kids, it's so sad because San Gabriel is all they know, and for a lot of them San Gabriel is all they're ever going to know. They get out, and they go work for uncle or they go work for whomever, and not that that's a bad thing for a lot of them, but on the other hand, you kind of have this feeling of why am I trying to teach you this, you know. It's not really going to matter for you.

Bree's consideration of "…why am I trying to teach you this [grammar]. It's not really going to matter for you," left me wondering what her classroom looked like. The presumption that most if not all of her students would never leave the rural town of San Gabriel and had no need to know how to write told a story that was difficult to hear.

On the last day of the institute, the teachers participated in a Silent Discussion of the two chapters, *Agency and Becoming Strategic* and *Knowing* from the Johnston (2004) text, *Choice Words*. They had a difficult time buying into the idea that students could begin to share the responsibility for learning and that the ultimate goal of questioning was for the students to ask the questions. The teachers took issue with the idea that the author encouraged the child not to believe everything an adult said, and in response Britney,

Bree, Michelle, Candace, and Kelly shared their thoughts. Michelle began, "Oh yeah, this is what I wanted, I didn't get to answer yours, but I like this question."

Candace asked, "The question about you can't believe anything an adult says?"

"It is a developmental concept. They're not going to be able to answer 'why' questions if they don't have basic knowledge," Britney added.

"Are you talking about in relation to their reading?" Bree asked.

"Just, even your experiences. They've never been out of this town. They know nothing," Britney said. Her comment, similar to Bree's above, regarding the students' lack of knowledge because "They've never been out of this town," left me wondering to what degree this belief influenced the experiences Britney created for her students. She appeared to hold on to this notion that her seventh graders did not have any experiences from which to draw as they participated in school. The conversation took a turn and now centered on student behavior when Britney said, "It's not easy because they don't know how to behave." In response to Britney, Bree recounted her experiences during a trip with a group of middle school students from an affluent school district approximately forty miles west of San Gabriel. And Bree replied:

> Jack and I took a group of seventeen eighth graders to Washington, DC this summer. They're all from Lake City. They all come from families who travel, go places, they do things outside of Lake City and those kids were the most well behaved children I have ever seen. I don't think I was that well behaved in eighth grade. And I was thinking, you know my kids have never been anywhere [*referring to her students at San Gabriel High School*][2]. Their parents, for whatever reason, don't want to, don't have the money, don't have the time, and I understand that that's a big deal.

[2] Brackets within a quotation clarify pronoun referents or add explanatory notes

"They don't know how to handle it," Britney added.

Thinking of her fourth graders, Kelly said, "They've only been to MacDonald's or Mr. Gattis on Monday nights when kids are free. That's it. They've never, they've only been to Wal-Mart. They've never been to a mall."

As a facilitator, Michelle took a listening stance but soon spoke, "I feel like we need to like work on some funding or something for them to get to go more often because that is a huge cultural divide. It puts them at a disadvantage.

To which they all responded, "It does."

"They don't have any social code. They don't know," Bree said.

Britney had the last word and said, "They have so low, low, low, no experience. The assumptions about children who live in San Gabriel raised questions about whether the curriculum of the institute could be persuasive. By the end of the conversation, three of the four teachers in this group engaged in and reinforced the other's deficit thinking. One belief of the National Writing Project is that students write about their experiences. If the teachers believe, as Britney, Bree, and Kelly do, that the students have no experiences from which to draw, then it would be difficult them to enact a writing curriculum similar to the one being taught in the institute.

While Britney and Bree were having the preceding conversation, Sheila sat with Joyce and Mandy for their small group discussion of the same Johnston (2004) chapters. Michelle had gravitated over to this group and became a member as well. Unlike the talkative nature of both Britney and Bree, Sheila said very little in the small group discussions. She listened and interjected a sentence now and then, but appeared to be

content as a listener. During the institute, there was no indication she held the same beliefs as Britney and Bree; however, in response to the idea of letting the student take hold of the question, she stated, "Well because with 'regular' classes so often when you question, you get one blank stare." Her statement implied that her 'regular' students were unable or unwilling to respond, let alone generate questions. This seemed to be a pervasive attitude among the teachers—those students who are in "regular" classes were deficient in some way and therefore were relegated to worksheets.

After entering Sheila's classroom in the fall, I found that she did not overtly use deficit language to describe her students; however her transmission model of instruction fostered a belief that her students could not work independently and required a carefully controlled classroom environment. The work of the project supported a social constructivist approach to teaching in which teachers modeled and scaffolded student learning. Given Sheila's teaching style, the change to a more dialogic classroom would take time.

The discourse of high stakes testing. Teachers "continually mediate between their personal understandings, values, and commitments, and the external requirements of teaching elaborated by policy makers, administrators, parents, and members of the public, all of whom stake claims on the contexted social practice of teaching" (Elbaz, 2002, p. 405). The discourse of high stakes testing "claimed" the institute as it wove its way in and out of presentations and conversations both public and private. This authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981), emanating from state and federal laws, inhibited the possibility of new knowledge becoming a part of the teachers' practice. This hegemonic

discourse was so pervasive that the facilitators, being public school teachers and themselves accountable to No Child Left Behind, justified many of the strategies from the institute as a way to improve student writing on the state assessment, thus adding value to the curriculum. Sara modeled *Three-Word Phases* (3 X 3), a strategy intended to expand a topic, and justified its use saying:

> What you really want…what TAKS [*state mandated test*] wants…in my opinion…I've been doing this fourth grade test for so dang long…and is this is the first year every single one of our fourth graders, SPED and dyslexic…we had 100% passing. That's what's always been the biggest thing. They give the kids such a huge, broad topic and the kids can't narrow it. They don't get one moment in time. But if they practice these three-word phrases all of the time—that is a pre-write. Take that prompt and underline that key word, whatever that word is and see what comes up.

While Sara was talking, Michelle was busy applying the strategy to the themes/concepts that were addressed on the Exit Level test. In regard to the idea of acceptance, she generated "It's difficult sometimes, necessary for growth" and then commented that she thought this list would help her students find a place to begin.

I must include myself as well, for in planning the curriculum, we included the chapter, *Answering Test Prompts by Drawing on the Best Memoir Writing* from Bomer (2005) that explicitly addressed answering test prompts. However, the content of the chapter did not support or encourage a formula. The premise was based on the notion that students had been writing many memoirs throughout the year that could be used as a starting place for the state assessment.

The discourse of high stakes testing was embedded in most of the talk about teaching reading and writing during professional development in our state, and the

institute was no exception. The institute had been underway for approximately ten minutes, when the discourse of high stakes testing was voiced. After the teachers completed the first reflection, Sara asked the group, "Does anyone want to tell us what your typical day looks like? The teachers were reluctant to respond as they gazed at Sara and waited for someone to say something. Finally, Candace, a third grade teacher, opened the conversation and said:

> I will. I teach third grade reading, and we do not emphasize writing like they do in fourth grade, but I am guilty. I have a writers' workshop in the morning—every morning. I give them a topic that correlates with what they are learning this week…

I could hear Candace revoicing the authoritative state discourse as she recounted the morning events in her classroom. Her comment illustrated how schools have responded to the testing requirements at the different grade levels. In our state, students must pass the third grade level reading test for promotion to fourth grade. Consequently, there was little to no writing time in these classrooms until late March, after the test. The idea that San Gabriel ISD structured its elementary classrooms in response to this discourse by creating "third grade reading teachers and fourth grade writing teachers" illustrated the district's response to this law that grew out of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2000. Although there are no high stakes associated with the fourth grade writing test, it was the first time that writing was assessed, and the schools responded by creating "writing teachers" for this grade level. Thus, creating a teaching and learning environment that moved in and out of focus depending on the test for that given year. Candace's feeling of guilt associated with the idea of allowing her students to write every morning, although

she was considered a reading teacher, spoke to the authoritative nature of this discourse.

Soon others joined in. Bree said, "My kids are length-driven. They want to know how long does it have to be…I tell them, 'Just start writing,' but they keep asking, 'How long does it have to be, Miss?'"

"When my students say that, I just tell them, 'as long as it needs to be,'" Joyce replied. In response to this comment, Bree slumped in an exaggerated motion with arms flailing with a huge sigh imitating the response she got from her students when she approached them in that manner. The other teachers laughed at her dramatic reenactment and nodded as if they could empathize with her. This notion of "length" was linked to the state assessment as well. The students have two pages of lined paper to complete their writing, so most writing was geared to fill up these pages. In addition, most, if not all, of the writing instruction throughout the school year was in response to prompts and practicing for the test. Bree's reaction provided a window into understanding the overlapping nature of the discourses. In the context of high stakes testing, her deficit view was evident in the ways in which she thought of her students—the identity she assigned them, and her expectations of them as students participating in a high school English classroom.

Sara concluded this segment and asked the teachers:

> Should we blame the state for that? [*referring to the length of the piece*]. I've been around for TABS, TEAMS, TAAS, and now TAKS. I've been teaching for 28 years. It started with kids writing to a picture prompt…maybe we can blame the state for that. That's another letter I need to write.

Sara, an experienced fourth grade teacher who had listened and responded to the state's demands over the course of her career posed this rhetorical question to the group. She spoke in a "rally-like" manner as if to summon support from the teachers and to say, "We are all in this together." Over the course of the four days, both Sara and Michelle appealed to the teachers through this sense of camaraderie. They positioned themselves first as teachers who share the same pressure from their districts as the teachers in San Gabriel, and second as facilitators.

The discourse of high stakes testing wove its way through many of the remaining activities. It was mid-morning on the second day of the institute when the teachers read the *Introduction* and *Chapter Two* from Fletcher's (1992), *What a Writer Needs*. In response to the text, Sara directed the teachers to choose one word that best represented the ideas in the text. Upon completion, small groups formed and it was interesting to learn that several teachers had chosen words that reminded them of the state mandated test. Britney's group began with an expression of guilt by Jule as she told the group, "The word I chose was 'label,' and what he said was you need to be very careful when you're using verbal shorthand to talk about a complex subject." Britney and the others in her group listened as Jule told her story of the way she created Essie the Essayist as a metaphor to help students learn to write for the TAKS test—great grabbers, body builders, and fabulous finales. "It became a recipe, and I felt really, really horrible about it because I knew that every year was different even though we called it the same thing." Because Jule was the Secondary Literacy Specialist at the time, she worried about the

ways in which she had fostered a reliance on such a structure for teaching writing for the sole purpose of improving the writing scores on the state test.

Britney consoled her and said, "But you know Jule, I understand what you're saying. I put 'recipe' and continued:

> But you know with the TAKS test, the seventh grade, the TAKS that's looming over us for six months up to February, you feel like you have to, you just have to start, I mean you're just throwing out a formula…the kids and I hate it too…But I put recipe because I do tend to do that and that's what I was talking about yesterday…I did TAKS on something. I did it for three by three. Don't eat candy, lots of protein. One restroom break. You may not talk. Lay your head down. Sharpen your pencil. Remember the strategy. There's like five hundred. Use your super words. Revise and edit. Count those words. Grab the reader. Two-hour snack. Timeline your TEKS. Revise and you read. I mean they're just like, their heads are spinning. But in six months, you feel like you have to start from scratch because you don't know how much they know…

As a seventh grade teacher, the tested year for writing, Britney felt enormous pressure as illustrated by her use of TAKS as the topic for her writing while practicing the strategy intended to develop a topic. The language she used and the cadence of the three-word phrases suggested the authoritative voice of high stakes testing.

Toward the end of day three, some conversations focused on the district curriculum guides that dictated the type of writing for each six week grading segment. The district developed these guides to ensure teachers taught the state curriculum and focused their efforts on the tested objectives. Kelly had moved from Kindergarten to Fourth grade—the first testing year for writing. Longing to be back with the five-year-olds she said:

> I love teaching writing to kindergarten. It's just a blast. And then I went to fourth grade and so I did the, I totally bought into the free write because I loved it, loved

> it, and then all of a sudden in our curriculum guide, it was you have to write a five paragraph essay on your three favorite people.

Kelly expressed her dismay with the mandates of the curriculum guides, and I found it interesting that the district supported equally two opposing philosophies—the efforts of the consultant who spent many hours working with a group of teachers to create the curriculum guides as well as the efforts of the Heart of Texas Writing Project.

Each day in their classrooms, the teachers in San Gabriel lived with fear and confusion—fear that students would fail the exam, which affected the state accountability ratings for their campus and district, and confusion over trying new ideas that ran counter to the district's initiatives that were skill driven.

The discourse of change. As noted by Sunstein (1991) there is an "implicit assumption of change" (p. 13) when teachers engage in professional development. A belief that teachers come to professional development to learn, and as a result of this learning, will make revisions to their existing practices. This ability to act as an agent of change—one in which the teachers see themselves empowered with the new knowledge to make the changes in their practice—is dependent upon the effectiveness of the curriculum to prepare the teachers to act as agents of change as they negotiate the landscape of school during a time of both national and state curriculum mandates. In other words, it is dependent on the degree to which the discourse is internally persuasive.

My interest in understanding how teachers made sense of, and participated in the learning opportunities that were afforded them, was tied to the notion of an eventual change in practice. While there was a dialogic interplay among the discourses of personal

practical knowledge, lived experiences, high-stakes testing, and deficit thinking within the teaching moments, these voices were stronger or weaker depending on the topic. Beginning with the initial reflection regarding their current practice, followed by Sara's comment about how, at the end of the four days they would return to these reflections to see if there was anything they would like to add or change in their classroom practice, the discourse of change was evident and was explicit in its expectation of incorporating the ideas from the institute into the teachers' practice. Embedded in each learning opportunity, both Sara and Michelle made comments such as "When you try this in your classroom…" an implied expectation of change, mostly evident in the facilitator's talk, as these strategies were intended to add to, or replace, existing practices.

As described earlier, the first day of the institute moved quickly in and out of activities that engaged the teachers in learning opportunities. Both Sara and Michelle accomplished this by modeling several generative writing strategies with the teachers as participants, and by day's end they had several seeds for what could become a draft. The day ended when Sara directed the group to, "Tell me one idea you can use in your classroom."

While Bree and Sheila were silent, Britney exclaimed, "3 X 3. I loved it!"

Throughout the institute, both Michelle and Sara encouraged the teachers to think about their learning and how this new knowledge might become a part of their practice. Sara opened the second day by prompting the teachers to think metaphorically about their learning as she instructed the teachers to make a connection between the word "pebble"

and one of the generative activities or one of the readings. She gave the following directions:

> So I have chosen the word *pebble*, and what I want you to do is make a new entry and writing the word pebble and then reflect on what we did yesterday. Anything and connect it to *pebble*. It forces your brain to engage so you can think about the Eavesdropping, you can think about the Three by Three, you can think about the colors, you can think about the articles, you can think about lunch, but you have to connect it to the word "pebble."

As Day two progressed, the discourse of change continued. Midway through the day, Michelle took time to recap what had taken place and she stated,

> I just want to kind of take a few minutes and recap how things have been going so far. It's always a little difficult when you just have four days together and granted it's hard in the summer to give more than four, but when you just have four days together and to try to emulate what you can actually do in your own classroom…"

Not only did the second day begin with thinking about how this new knowledge might lead to a change in practice, it ended this way as well. In response to the homework readings from *Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices* (Fletcher, 2006), Sara and Michelle directed the teachers to "Write down three things that would change your practice and/or understanding of boy writers."

The discourse of change continued on day three with this opening reflection. Michelle explained:

> Think about a reluctant writer and/or reader you've had as a student… ponder about what strategies or ideas that we've done here in this room together or have read about together might be beneficial for that student had you known then what you know now.

This particular prompt encouraged the teachers to make this learning experience real as they connected the events to their practice by having them visualize a student who would

actually be using the strategy. During the afternoon of the third day, the teachers formed small groups for the purpose of discussing the Fletcher's (2006) chapters on boy writers.

Both Sara and Michelle maintained the change discourse throughout the four days and on the morning of the fourth day one conversation focused on making curricular changes and illustrated Britney's apparent lack of agency as well as Sheila's expressed needs in order to be successful. Jule said, "Maybe if I were changing my curriculum a little bit, I would read less realistic fiction too because I'm thinking, 'Okay, where are those mentor texts?'" Jule offered the example of a high school teacher who had her students read *Feed*, by M.T. Anderson, as a way to connect the idea of expanding genre choices to include science fiction. "Our textbooks don't offer…"

Don't offer a lot of that [Science Fiction], Sheila interjected.

Britney entered the conversation and said, "What is that…Maple Street?"

"Oh and they love that! *The Monsters are Due on Maple Street.* I did read that one," Jule said.

"But we never get to it because we do all this. We've got to read Rikki Tikki Tavi while we're doing the narrative," Britney said.

Encouraging Britney to take ownership of her curriculum, Jule said, "But *you* have the power to change that." From Britney's response it was apparent she did not acknowledge Jule's suggestion to change the book choice and once again, Jule said, "But you have the power to change that."

Sheila soon jumped into the conversation and voiced what she needed in order to make some changes in her teaching. "I think we need to bring in more mentor materials.

That's what I need. You know I'm not comfortable teaching some of these different genres so I need…So I need mentor materials to bring it in and let the kids experience…" Sheila explained. Over the course of this conversation, Jule encouraged both Britney and Sheila to act as agents to make the changes they wanted to make offering to help when she suggested they "pick a couple of things to try…you know, not change everything."

In creating the curriculum for San Gabriel ReWrites, we purposefully made explicit references to our expectation that the teachers would attempt to rethink their current writing curriculum by adding some of the ideas from the institute. As illustrated above, these were in the form of opening daily reflections, writing breaks during instruction, homework reading responses, and closing reflections at the end of each day as well as a final reflection that asked the teachers to write in response to the question, "What do you envision for the coming school year? What are your hopes? Concerns? Questions?" Below, are the notebook entries from my three focal cases that serve as the beginning for the individual stories that follow this chapter.

Britney:

> *"My hopes for the upcoming year include sticking to the notebook and not abandoning it for TAKS. I want to do the 3 X 3, color characters, read aloud, blabbermouths, museum exhibit, flip the notebook to write to middle, find mentor texts to help support writing, and finally, allow my kids to write out of the 'personal narrative' box.*
>
> *I am always concerned about the 'powers that be' questioning my motives and looking for the 'published pieces.' I want my students to experiment with their writing. I think self-evaluations will definitely help them. I must commit to writing <u>every day</u>, without fail.*

Sheila:

> *"My hopes are to truly incorporate the writer's notebook in my classes this year and not just be strong the first semester. I saw good results from the continued use of the notebook, and this needs to be continued every day in class.*
>
> *I'm considering to use the 3 X 3 strategy, the crayola exercise, the museum exhibit. And try ten. Theses are foremost on my mind, but I also plan to use the rubric for writer's notebook. I got lots of good, practical ideas to try.*
>
> *I'm concerned about moving away from so much direct-teach grammar, but I see more and more how unproductive this is. I can adjust, but I'm concerned about other grade-level teachers hanging on to grammar for dear life! This will be a challenge!*

Bree:

> *"I hope I can really institute long term use of the writer's notebook as a tool to develop better writing and more confidence in my students. I hope to elevate the stature of these notebooks from journal to useful writing tool.*
>
> *I am concerned using a more conceptual based outline in my lesson plans. I really like the idea of having one over-arching idea/question for the entire year of study. I'm just not sure yet what that idea will be.*
>
> *My only concern now is being able to put all these ideas into practice. Sometimes it all seems so easy at the workshop. Then you actually get to your classroom and…but we shall see.*
>
> *I don't think there was anything this week that didn't fit with my beliefs about writing instruction. If anything, it further cemented my current beliefs.*

Britney, Sheila, and Bree's writing identified the strategies they considered as possible additions to their curriculum as well as their concerns: questioning by administrators, fear of moving away from direct grammar instruction, and worrying about implementation once they returned to their classrooms. As evidenced in the story of *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, the knowledge building of the three focal teachers was influenced by the discourses of their lived experiences, personal practical knowledge, deficit thinking and

high stakes testing. All of which competed for attention, often engaging the teachers in a dialogic exchange between and among the discourses.

According to Bakhtin (1981), authoritative discourse is a transmitted text—transmitting another's discourse; therefore I considered the curriculum as authoritative because it originated in the university. However, the curriculum was transmitted through the internally persuasive discourses of the narrated experiences of both Sara and Michelle with the hope that the teachers would appropriate and assimilate it as internally persuasive. Throughout the institute there were moments when the teachers' lived experiences were both authoritative and persuasive as they ventriloquated the discourses that found their origin in moral, religious, political, and adult [parent/teacher] voices (Bakhtin, 1981). What I found and what the stories that lie ahead indicate is that the various discourses played a role in the teachers' appropriation of this new knowledge. As stated by Greene (1988), "beginnings must be thought possible if authentic learning is expected to occur" (p. 22), and it seemed that the discourses of deficit thinking and high stakes testing were a factor not only in the institute, but also in the teachers' classrooms regarding the possibility for change.

Based on their participation throughout the institute and their thoughts as they completed the four days, a critical piece to the study would be the time I spent in each teacher's classroom observing their instruction and talking about their experiences, both personal and professional. It was my aim to further consider the ways in which both authoritative and persuasive discourses influenced their knowledge building and the degree to which the teachers had enacted new knowledge in their practice. The story just

told and the stories that follow are only one of many that could be told. They represent my story of their stories and speak of possibilities rather than definitive answers to my questions.

As Greene (1988) has written:

> I wanted people to name themselves and tell their stories when they made their statements. I came to believe that 'reality' referred, after all, to interpreted experience. Resisting the notion of a finished, predetermined, objective reality, I became fascinated not merely with multiple modes of interpretation, but with all that fed into interpretation from lived lives and sedimented meanings (p. xiii).

Her words speak to my desired outcome of this narrative.

Chapter 3: Britney—A Story of Powerlessness

Looking up and off to the side, she pondered the idea of a pseudonym, and said, "Someone who is wealthy and doesn't need to work—just call me Paris," referring to Paris Hilton.

"Okay," I replied.

Her response surprised me, but then as if she had thought of the perfect name, she said, "Britney—B.S.—Britney Spears because I'm having a nervous breakdown."

(Britney, December 2007)

This is a story about Britney, a mid-career teacher who emanated feelings of discontent and defeat in both her personal and teaching life and the ways in which these feelings affected her ability to enact a change in her classroom practice. The way Britney positioned herself in her story, and the way she interpreted her lived experiences at home and at school seemed to limit the possibility for change as she blamed forces outside herself for her unhappiness. Lasch (1984) referred to this interpretation of self as "minimal selves" (p. 59) and Greene (1988) as "men and women experiencing themselves as overwhelmed by external circumstances, victimized, and powerless" (p. 3). Throughout our time together, Britney narrated her experiences in a way that portrayed her as a person who felt she had little control over the events in her life. This lack of agency and personal sense of powerlessness appeared to be related to Britney's struggle to teach language arts in an environment dominated by the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing. In addition, the internally persuasive discourse of deficit thinking played a significant role in the ways in which she perceived, not only her students, but herself as well.

As previously mentioned, the story that follows is one of many stories that I could tell about Britney. Through her own words, captured during small group interactions in the summer institute, as well as interviews, casual conversational exchanges, notebook entries, and classroom observations during the school year that followed, this story begins with a prequel describing Britney's childhood and middle school experiences in language arts classes. Her story continues with her recollections of her pre-service education, weaving its way through her professional life as a middle school English teacher, including her reasons for attending the summer writing institute, San Gabriel ReWrites; and her personal life as a sister, wife, and mother. Reading about Britney's experiences may help us begin to understand the limited agency that many teachers feel and the ease with which teachers can see themselves as victims and powerless.

Prequel

Britney grew up in Somerfield, a small town just east of San Gabriel, during the 70s and 80s. She characterized the town as a working class community with a large Latino population, a place "where everybody knew everybody." However, like San Gabriel, Somerfield has grown exponentially over the past two decades. Both of her parents were raised in Somerfield, have been married for more than forty years, and still live in the same house that Britney and her younger sister called home. Britney's mother was a teacher in Somerfield and taught both first and second grade over her twenty-five year career. She said her dad is a "math kind of person who's more linear, logical and my mom is not. She's more of that creative, you know she does all that stuff that I would

never be able to do like sew and cook and bake." Assuming this meant that Britney was more like her dad, I could not have been more incorrect as she insisted:

> No, not at all. …I hate math. I don't, you can look at me, I mean *look*—I'm not organized. Organization is not my thing. My sister is more like my father. She wants things to be simple, and she always seems to have everything under control all the time. Her house is always perfect. It's always clean. Her hair is like done and her nails are done.

There was a bit of "wishing I could be more like her" tone in her voice as she described her younger sister who is now a court reporter in the county for the Juvenile Court. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Britney spoke often about her own children and the chaos that surrounded her life at home, and expressed her need to simplify through journal writing and to me in conversation.

Schooling in Somerfield, and in particular Britney's experiences in seventh and eighth grade English class followed a predictable pattern. Remembering her junior high experience, she said:

> I went to junior high, and it was seventh and eighth grade, and I probably acted a lot like they do [*looking around her classroom referencing the students who sit in the seats*]. You know, social. I didn't write letters, I didn't write notes. That wasn't my thing…Anyway we just had English. We called it English. I diagrammed sentences until I was blue in the face. And you know what? I have absolutely no recollection of reading. I don't remember ever, we never did a novel. We never did a unit of study. We never talked about anything except grammar, diagramming sentences, and I think that's why it's not an issue for me, and I don't understand why they just can't get it [*referring to her current students*].

This recollection highlighted three areas that Britney often referred to during my time in her classroom: her frustration that her students wrote notes all day but would not work on their "writing," her personal comfort with grammar and not understanding why it was

difficult for her students to master it, and her inclination to favor reading over writing. Talking about Ms. Thomas, her seventh grade English teacher, Britney said:

> My seventh grade teacher was Ms. Thomas, a Black woman who was strict, and that was when you could be taken to the hall and paddled, so people got that quite often. Mostly boys. She was real funny though, and everybody liked her.

This description of Ms. Thomas painted a picture of a classroom in which the teacher was in control, a no-nonsense environment that required the students to do as they were told. According to Britney, English in Ms. Thomas's class looked the same every day. Ms. Thomas would diagram a sentence as an example and then assign twenty sentences for the students to complete. At times, students wrote their work on the board while the students in their seats checked their work. Britney's memory of writing instruction prompted a three-word response, "Five-paragraph paper," and an image of an outline of the five paragraphs on the board denoting the kind of information that goes in each of the paragraph. Although Britney's eighth grade English class mirrored her experience in seventh grade, she remembered doing a poetry unit in Honors English that year. Britney believed that her participation in Honors classes limited her interaction with others in her grade. With only one section of twenty students, the group stayed together all day beginning in seventh grade and continuing through high school.

After graduating from Somerfield High School, Britney attended South Central University to study English and become a high school teacher. "I kind of always wanted to be [a teacher] because my mom was, and I loved, I played school, and you know, I did….I just always wanted to and nobody ever tried to talk me out of it," she said. Britney completed her student teaching in 1994 in a nearby district and was hired the next

school year as an eighth grade language arts teacher in that district. Soon afterward, she married Sam, a man also from Somerfield. They bought a home, started a family, and settled down in Britney's childhood town. At the time of the study she had a nine year-old son and six year-old twin girls. In 2003, she changed districts and began teaching seventh grade in San Gabriel to be closer to home.

Britney's lived experiences with her family and her school biography provided a glimpse into understanding how she related to her students and negotiated the landscape of her classroom. School was easy for Britney. And, although the data will show that she worked to create a different reading and writing experience than the one she had as a student in seventh grade, the kind of student she was in school may have contributed to her inability, at times, to understand why it was so difficult for some of her students to meet her expectations. This perspective made it difficult for Britney to incorporate some of the new knowledge into her practice.

Britney's Story

On a mild November morning, I drove across the same state highway I had traveled with Sara and Michelle the previous summer. It was the first time since the writing institute that I would talk to Britney. I entered the teacher parking lot of San Gabriel Middle School for my first interview. The conversation would serve two purposes: one, as a follow-up to her participation in the summer writing institute, and two, as my initial entry into Britney's classroom. I planned to explore Britney's childhood experiences, school biography, and pre-service and early career teaching experience. In addition, I wanted to begin to understand her purpose in attending the two

writing institutes—what she hoped to learn, the challenges she faced as a teacher generally and writing teacher specifically, and her thoughts about effective professional development. This interview, I hoped, would provide background for the observations I would conduct in the coming months.

The school day was already underway. It was in between second and third period as I opened the door to the building and made my way through several groups of students who took this time to catch up with friends, hold hands with their boyfriends/girlfriends, and pass notes as they walked to their next classes. Midway down the hallway, Britney stood outside her classroom visiting with a colleague. Walking toward her with a smile, she acknowledged my arrival, looked at me with tired eyes, and said, "Let's go get this done."

We entered her classroom. With the lights off and the students gone, it was quiet, and she commented on the peacefulness of the moment. This was third period; one of two conference periods for Britney, and the interrupted block that I soon learned has burdened her for the past three years. Rather than eight, forty-five minute classes, the middle school schedules math and English/language arts for ninety minutes each day, joining two periods to create an extended period that is considered a "block." The remaining classes are forty-five minutes each. Britney expressed a bit of frustration with what is termed a "split block," "They go dance, then come back to write," she said. The students are scheduled for second and fourth period language arts with third period as an elective—they come for forty-five minutes, leave for forty-five minutes, and then return for forty-five minutes.

Britney appeared unhappy, wondering aloud why she kept teaching. Her demeanor was not unlike the attitude she displayed during the four-day institute this past summer. The defeated tone in her voice was similar to the one I heard during the summer institute and continued throughout the school year that followed regarding students' deficiencies and the pressures of the state mandated writing test. Talk of data analysis, district initiatives, and her own shortcomings as a teacher dominated her discourse.

Sitting at a round table across from me, Britney recounted her university-based teacher preparation and early teaching experiences. "I went to South Central…that was a long time ago," she acknowledged. According to Britney, her pre-service program did not prepare her to teach writing, and it was not something she had actually considered because as she stated:

> My intention was to teach high school, and so I wasn't really that concerned about writing because when I came out…when I was in college, it was the research paper, just informative, there was no, no stories being written.

She commented that the last time she had written a story was in sixth grade and that most often, English/language arts consisted of "diagramming sentences until our eyes crossed and writing research papers. That's all we did…the outline, thesis statement…there was never any kind of reflective writing." Britney's reference to reflective writing was connected to the state mandated test and the type of writing that was expected. Her reference highlighted the dominance of the state regulated discourse in her teaching of writing.

She began her career in 1994 at Dove Middle School—first as a student teacher in a seventh grade English language arts (ELA) class, and the following year as an eighth

grade English language arts teacher. The school was considered an exemplary model for reading/writing workshop. Two of the ELA teachers were trainers for a privately held writing project in our state. The remaining ELA faculty had been through a three-week institute with this project, including Britney the summer after her student teaching. Britney's professional life began in eighth grade—a testing year for writing, and her move to seventh grade coincided with the state moving the writing test to that grade level. For Britney, this change translated to twelve years of teaching English language arts in the tested grade level. Although her campus embraced the philosophy and strategies that were central to the philosophy of the National Writing Project, she felt limited by the demands of the state test. At that time, the writing test was based on the aims and modes of writing—informative, descriptive, comparative, and persuasive. Now, with the advent of a revised test that embraced reflective writing, Britney, in the company of most English teachers in our state, scrambled to understand the new rubric and models provided by the state education agency. Thus, she expressed her reasons for attending the two-week institute, *San Gabriel Writes 2006*:

> Because of the writing test and the process. I've never been good at…I've taken [the private writing project], and I've done, you know, Eastside Writes…I did all of that, but that was in the early 90's, and so I felt like I was very…I needed to refresh myself and find some new ways.

From Britney's explanation, it was apparent that her primary reason for attending the institute in the summer of 2006 was to learn new strategies for the test. She justified her need for new ideas and characterized her unsuccessful attempts at incorporating a workshop approach to teaching when she moved to San Gabriel Middle School saying,

"It was not structured enough for that particular group. It just wouldn't work." And when I asked her why, she replied:

> Nothing worked. Those kids could not, they couldn't—well we didn't have these [*holding up one of her student's writer's notebooks*]. And I didn't know…I just used portfolios, so they kept all their writing, and that wasn't the only thing that they couldn't do. I mean there was a lot of things they couldn't do. And then the next year…the next year was a little better, but it never, it just wasn't…nothing ever felt authentic, you know, the writing. It was very…it was like pulling teeth. That's why I went [*to the two writing institutes, San Gabriel Writes 2006 and San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*]. Just because I needed some help to try to figure out what…what would work.

The words she used to describe her students' ability stayed consistent throughout our time together. Britney spoke about her students' inability to follow her lead and function in the kind of writing classroom she envisioned. In the same breath, she expressed what she perceived as her own shortcomings as she appeared to struggle with her own inability to make her classroom work for the students she was teaching. This deficit view of both her students and herself played a critical role in the way she approached new ideas and the possibility for successful implementation with her students.

Britney attended a writing institute early in her career, had the support of master writing teachers, and continued her professional growth in writing by attending *San Gabriel Writes 2006;* however, she struggled during the following school year to incorporate some of the ideas related to using a writer's notebook. She said, "I wasn't very good, you know. I went in real strong with it, and then by December, it's like we've got to do this grammar stuff. I mean we still went back to it and worked, but it wasn't daily." She found it difficult to organize and manage the notebook based on what she had learned in the two-week institute, so she attended the four-day follow-up, *San Gabriel*

ReWrites 2007. The curriculum for this institute was specifically designed to teach the teachers effective strategies for using the notebook as the centerpiece for writing instruction. She said, "I need more strategies to work on writing. I just needed more…more mini-lessons, more strategies."

She expressed a genuine desire to learn and found strategies such as "3 X 3," described in Chapter Two, worthy of including in her practice. "That worked out very well. We've used it quite a few times," she stated. When asked if other ideas stood out for her, she mentioned the generative writing activity of creating crayon characters, "I loved that!" she exclaimed, but then admitted she had not used it yet, "because I haven't figured out how to manage it in my head. I was like, oh, it's hard to explain it to them. I think it's very GT…there's no right or wrong." This categorizing of strategies for different groups of students based on their ability, as well has Britney's belief that she was not ready to teach the strategy, illustrated how she engaged in what Bakhtin (1981) referred to as an intramental dialogism, a conversation with oneself. She tried to resolve the conflict between the authoritative discourse of the writing institute curriculum and the internally persuasive discourse of her personal practical knowledge that supported the notion that both she and her students had difficulty with exploratory tasks.

Although Britney's responses demonstrated her desire to learn new strategies as well as her struggle to include some of the new knowledge in her practice, her explanations indicated that she was looking for just the right activities that would move the students' writing from a score point of one or two to a score point of three or four on the state mandated test. Her focus on learning new strategies in response to the

authoritative discourse of high stakes testing illustrated the complicated nature of the change process, and that the curriculum needed to include content beyond strategies.

Our conversation was winding down just as the bell rang signaling the end of third period and the interview. Britney's students, who had been here for second period, returned for fourth period to complete their block of instruction. Smiling, giggling, and gossiping, eighteen girls walked in and took their seats. Coming in just ahead of the bell was Dominick, the only boy in the class and one of four African American students. Of the eighteen girls, there were seven Latinas, three African-American, and eight White students.

Britney's Classroom

During our conversation and on subsequent visits, I noticed that Britney's classroom was similar to most secondary settings—four rows of desks with six or seven seats in each row, and in keeping with the more traditional room arrangement, the desks faced the overhead projector that sat on the media cart at the front of the room. On the front wall, the whiteboard provided space for Britney's daily agenda and four bar charts that illustrated the students' level of achievement, in terms of percentages, on the district's benchmark for reading and writing for each block she taught, another indication of the importance of testing. The center of the board served as a screen for the overhead projector and document camera. Above the windows there was a commercially produced sign, "Never settle for less than your best." Hundreds of books, hanging folders for student portfolios, and a round table for small group instruction and conferencing distinguished this classroom, as a place in which reading and writing occurred.

With her desk set at a forty-five degree angle across the back corner of the room, down from the door, Britney's personal space appeared minimal, including a four-drawer filing cabinet that sat behind her desk and a small table with her computer alongside. Over time, I noticed that Britney sat there to take care of school business and grade papers during her personal conference period but rarely when the students were in class—only briefly when she entered the attendance on the computer.

Next to her desk and along the back wall, a white painted bookcase framed the windows with a poster that read, *Books are Treasures Waiting to be Discovered*, tacked to the space above; another set of bookcases lined the far wall. Stackable trays, one for each student that held binders, writers' notebooks, and self-select books sat on top, one set for each block—two/four, five/six, and seven/eight, and book jackets that represented the most current young adult literature such as *Inkspell* (Funke, 2007), *Warriors* (Hunter, 2007), *and The Eldest* (Paolini, 2007), marched across the wall above. The shelves were filled with an assortment of young adult novels and children's books and served as evidence that Britney valued the use of a classroom library and embraced the practice of students self-selecting their reading books. Each book bore the remnant of a colored sticker indicating the reading level determined by the Accelerated Reading Program—a program that recently was abandoned by the middle school. Adding to the décor, commercially produced posters of "Good Writing Traits," student writing from her PreAP class, and a pocket chart titled, "Snippets," that held the names of the books she used as examples of good writing completed the landscape.

Britney's Teaching

I observed Britney's classroom during her second/fourth period split block. This group of students represented her "regular" language arts class and the group Britney expressed having the most difficulty teaching.

During one of my visits, Britney said that her classroom was a reading room and struggled to be a writing room. Her comfort with reading was exemplified in one of her personal quick-writes. Drawing from Georgia Heard (1995), Britney assigned a notebook entry titled, Mi Querencia, meaning "my safe place," and she wrote along with her students, "I love to read—searching for books, sharing books, talking about stories is my passion." Although Britney thought her room looked more like a reading room than a writing room, my observations in her classroom coupled with our conversations led me to believe that she was actually quite knowledgeable about writing instruction. The underlying belief in a workshop approach was evident through the structure of her class time that included notebook entries, a mini-lesson followed by writing time, and the use of mentor text as models that connected reading to writing. She often reflected on the day's events for improvement, yet she had difficulty seeing her own potential as a writing teacher as well as the power to create the kind of classroom, as well as professional experience, she valued. It was interesting to hear how the reflective process advocated by the writing project seemed to make her feel less capable.

The physical organization of Britney's classroom held many clues to the variety of reading and writing experiences that Britney made available for her students. Each day that I spent in Britney's classroom followed a similar pattern as the day before, and

contradicted Britney's perceptions of herself as disorganized. The structure of class time remained consistent throughout the year and followed the posted agenda. Each day, Britney wrote the agenda on the whiteboard for the ninety-minute block of instruction. For example:

Obj: Revisions
Inferences
Figurative Language
Flashback, Foreshadowing, Symbolism

December 11, 2007	Pre-AP
1. SSR	SSR
2. Mini-lesson	"Titanic"
3. Small Groups	Finish all make-up work
4. Snippet	
HW: Homophone Split—	Read 30 minutes
Read 30 minutes	Book Jacket Due 12/21

Each day the objectives were always listed first, followed by the sequence of the daily activities. The class time consistently began with twenty minutes of sustained silent reading (SSR), and Britney set a timer for this event to stay on schedule. Students could go to the library to check out a new book, if they were ready, while Britney recorded the name of the students' books and the page number from which they began reading, and then read her book along with the students.

After SSR, Britney began the mini-lesson. On this particular day, using a piece of her own writing, she modeled how to bracket all of the first words and created a hand-written list that enabled the students to see how often they began a sentence with the same word. Most of the class had their drafts, and if they did not, Britney directed them to use an entry from their writers' notebook. One student said, "I don't have any repeated

words," while another student asked, "What if I only have two?" Britney acknowledged the voices, but continued the lesson by modeling how to change the beginnings of the sentences. Following the mini-lesson, the students revised their sentence beginnings while Britney met with a small group of students to work on complex sentence patterns. She wanted to revisit the common conjunctions [after, although, as, when, while, until, because, before, if, since] for the purpose of preparing the students for the revising and editing section on the TAKS test. Once again, Britney modeled with her own writing and the girls in the group responded to her instruction. The rest of the class was very quiet, and worked independently while Britney spent time with the four girls.

That same day, Britney guided the students through the process of finding, what she called a "snippet." She chose *The Tequila Worm* by Viola Canales (2007) and used a think aloud strategy to model how to listen for language that draws the reader into the text. She encouraged the students to listen for a snippet as she read the text and to write it into their notebooks. Britney's modeling and writing with her students were consistent with effective instruction, but she had difficulty seeing these characteristics as strengths in her teaching for her students.

In January, I observed Britney lead the class through an activity she called, "Truisms." Fully prepared for the lesson, Britney had an assortment of books such as multiple volumes of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and others that contained inspirational language and quotes. She handed each student a book, directing them to flip through the pages and jot down phrases or sayings in their writers' notebook that they believed in. The students were completely engaged in the activity. After three minutes, Britney had

the students pass the book to the person behind them. Again, they flipped through the text looking for words that "spoke" to them. This continued for several turns, and when Britney finished the rotation, the students were chattering away, eager to share what they had found. She often engaged the students in activities that promoted growth in reading and writing, such as locating truisms, but at times had difficulty seeing these successes in a way that she could build on the students' energy.

Britney used her notebook as a teaching tool, modeling and participating in the writing activities she planned for her students. Her notebook served as a record for her instruction and was a place in which she reflected on her practice illuminating the dialogic interplay of discourses within her. Her entries included stories of her childhood and her family that were truly endearing; yet she remained conflicted by the relationships she shared with her students and family. Rather than taking her frustrations out on her students, she used her notebook as a place to vent about her own shortcomings as a teacher, mother, and wife, as well as her students' and the state mandated test.

The students returned to their lists of truisms in the days ahead using them as a catalyst for writing. An interesting outcome of collecting the truisms was the insight it provided into Britney and the ways in which the truisms she found mirrored some of the feelings she expressed in conversations and in her own writing. Her list included sayings such as, "By the time you can make ends meet, they move the ends," "A man can't know what it's like to be a mother," "Low expectations are good protection," "Disorganization is a kind of anesthesia," and "If you live simply, there is nothing to worry about." From the list, the reference to living "simply" and "disorganization as anesthesia" had already

been confirmed through Britney's comments during the institute and from her first interview.

In early spring, I was sitting in the back of the room one day, when a student approached Britney before class smiling and said, "You know why I was laughing? All the teachers, they tend to yell and scream at people and then they say, 'Now that that is out of my system, let's get back to business.' But you don't scream and that is cool." Britney smiled in response. Britney did not yell and scream. She kept her emotions bottled up inside and her words eventually made their way to her notebook and then to me by way of conversation throughout the year that I spent in her classroom. My observations of Britney's teaching confirmed that she was knowledgeable of many practices that were appropriate for middle school literacy development. However, within these moments Britney voiced confusion, "I can't understand why they can't write a sentence." Consequently, Britney's frustration with teaching was evident through her references to students as "sloths and rotten" that peppered her talk. As noted in the institute, I thought of this deficit talk as a societal discourse that appeared to be an internally persuasive one.

Britney and the Discourse of Deficit Thinking

Britney's deficit talk fostered a climate of negativity about herself as an effective teacher and of her students. One day when I observed Britney's classroom, she met with a small group of students to work on their sentences. Smiling and laughing as she worked with a group of four girls, Britney came to life. She was playful and encouraging. However, these moments were a rare occurrence. Most often, Britney complained about

her students, a pattern she suggested began early in her tenure at San Gabriel Middle School. Writing with her students, Britney wrote to the prompt, "A Time I was the New Kid." She wrote:

> *When I first started teaching in San Gabriel, I thought I was losing my mind. The kids were terrible—everything was so overwhelming. My mind was scrambled. I had no direction and I felt like I had screwed up my whole life. No on could tell me what I was teaching. Really—I made it up as I went along. I never thought anything out. I remember sitting at my desk, looking at a stack of bills* [handwriting is larger and messier], *knowing I needed to pay them and not sitting there staring at them* [handwriting is large and scribbled, taking up three lines in the notebook].

The physical act of writing the entry seemed to underscore how the financial pressure from her personal life played a role in her feelings of powerlessness. This fed her deficit talk about the decision she made to change districts, San Gabriel Middle School (SGMS), and the students. From her writing, it seemed that the first year at SGMS had started off poorly. Coming from a district that was organized and goal-oriented, and one that embraced a writing workshop philosophy for language arts teachers, Britney's only experience as a teacher was one in which support was readily available and one in which most teachers were heading in the same direction with their instruction. Britney's first year difficulties at San Gabriel arose because she didn't have the same support and SGMS did not subscribe to a workshop philosophy. In addition, the two schools were demographically different. Her first impression of the students as "terrible" and wondering if she "had screwed her whole life up" by making the move. Four years later, she continues to describe the students as having "blank stares," and made comments such as "They know nothing," "Nothing worked. Those kids could not…" This deficit

discourse seemed to influence the decisions Britney made regarding the writing instruction she provided for her students such as restricting the opportunities for independent writing.

During the summer institute, Britney's first entry, written ten minutes into the day, ended with the following prediction for the upcoming school year:

> *I'm anticipating a crappy year ahead. You get a good year about every 3 – 4. My turn was 2006 – 2007.*

On one of my visits to school the following year, I attended a grade-level data meeting. While looking over the results of the release practice test, Britney, anticipating the worst from her "regular" class, said, "Oh God, this class," but soon in a surprised voice said, "Get outta here," as she read that 80% of the class had passed this portion.

Katherine, the literacy specialist replied, "There you go. Keep the faith," but even this success was soon met with dissatisfaction from Britney as the meeting continued and the teachers talked about their plans for intervention to increase the scores of those students who did not pass.

Britney's feelings about her students were woven throughout her teaching stories as well as her personal stories. As previously mentioned, Britney's sister worked as a court reporter for the juvenile court system and transcribed the hearings. With a half-grin on her face, Britney said:

> … my sister sits and listens to all the horror stories and transcribes them. And all the kids you know are in their shackles and orange jumpsuits. A Hannible Lector you know…So when I'm talking to her about my, about *these* kids, to her that sounds like Prisoner 205…But she thinks that, you know, *she* has good stories to tell me and I'm like, "Yeah, it does sound like my third period class or, you know, whatever."

I was struck by the way in which Britney spoke about her students and the comparison, first to the young adults who entered the court system, and second, to Hannibal Lector, the psychopath from the movie *Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991). Examples of her deficit thinking surfaced throughout the school year. Again, while writing with her students, she wrote:

> "*A Time I Wanted Something to End"*
>
> *My block AP class is so unbelievably chaotic, I can't think. They are so busy and unfocused my hair stands up by the end of class. I'm done with craziness. Any transition puts them in a tizzy!...a group that is typically fine one on one, but as a group, they suck!...There are some real lazys in this class. They cannot work without acting stupid. It makes me want the year to end already.*

This entry was dated, October 5, 2007. The first six weeks of school had just ended, and she was already frustrated and ready to give up on this one group of students labeling them as "unfocused and lazy."

Britney's negative feeling toward her students was at times fueled by the choices she made. She often set herself up to fail as she insisted on taking the students to the computer lab, knowing it rarely went smoothly because the equipment was old. Britney commented, "We're going to the lab fourth period, so it should be a disaster. You know, of course, it will be horrible." During the period, Britney tried to conference with individual students, but there were so many problems with the computers that it made it nearly impossible to have meaningful conversations in her one-on-one time. She had asked the students to generate three questions about their writing before coming for a conference but then expressed her disappointment with the outcome:

> And that works sometimes and sometimes they don't even know what they've written because they don't you know they just don't ever look back at what they wrote. So they don't even know what they should be. They just want me to do everything. You know you hear, "Is that good?" That's what they'll tell you. "Is this good? Is this right?" And I'm like, you don't have three questions, go back. But for kids that don't have any ability to reflect on their own writing, to look back in their own process, you know what they've written. They're never going to have three questions because everything is satisfactory to them. The words are on the paper. They don't care.

Britney's explanation placed the blame on the students and their inability to generate questions. She continued to view the students as having deficits saying, "They don't care." She came to *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* for ideas; however, it seemed that the deficit discourse was more persuasive than the curriculum. And although Britney often spent the class's journal writing time reflecting on her practice, she struggled to look within her own teaching to see what she could do to build her students' capacity to reflect on their writing process while working in the computer lab.

On a different occasion, Britney commented on problems associated with using a writer's notebook, saying, "I know that they're supposed to be able to manage it [the notebook] themselves, but they can't even remember to bring their books to class so there's no way they're going to keep up with all that." Her deeply imbedded discourse about the students as forgetful, lazy, incapable, and unruly was voiced in deficit language.

Not only did Britney engage in deficit talk about her students, but she also spoke negatively about her own performance as a teacher and mother. A January notebook entry read:

> *I've been a crappy teacher this year with reading. I don't look for snippet books. I don't spend time looking for new books. I think it's because I'm broke and because there are about three kids in every class that actually care.*

Within this comment about her disappointment in herself, she not only blamed her life circumstances but her students as well. And yet in another entry Britney wrote,

I read to my students a lot. It may be one of the only things that I am good at.

I empathized with her while reading her thoughts because she has potential beyond what she sees in herself, and this may be part of the reason she struggled to see the potential in her students.

Another factor that influenced the ways in which Britney viewed her students and herself was the unhappiness in her personal life that she alluded to in another notebook entry:

> *My dh* [dumb husband] *took over that night which started another downhill spiral that we now pay for. A lot. He is really getting on my nerves—he always plays the victim. Everyone blames him. Poor thing. Well—he looks shocked when the clothes aren't all done. He spends all his time worrying about football He never even thinks about the kids' other responsibilities, like HW* [homework], *lunches, folders, clothes, order forms, forms to fill out, backpacks, daycare, after school care. I'm just pissed!* ☹

As I read this entry, I was struck by her use of the words "victim" and "blame." She was frustrated with her husband for "playing the victim," yet I saw her in this way as well. From my observations and conversations with Britney, there appeared to be a link between the unsettled feelings in her family relationships and the relationships she formed with her students. Throughout the summer writing institute and the months that followed in her classroom, Britney struggled to reconcile these conflicts and engaged in

an inner dialogue to vent and make sense of what was happening in both her personal and teaching life.

Complicating the scenario, the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing and what Britney considered the unreasonable demands of the district, state, and national government added more pressure to her teaching life.

Britney and the Discourse of High Stakes Testing

For San Gabriel ISD and most school districts in our state, one of the dominant discourses was high stakes testing. In terms of story, the test determined the plot, which shaped the teachers' interactions with students, colleagues, and administrators.

On the first day back from the holiday, I attended the weekly data meeting with Britney and the other seventh grade teachers. Every Wednesday during third period, they met to analyze and discuss the data from the district benchmark tests in order to create lessons that would address those objectives that required re-teaching. When asked the purpose of the meeting, the grade-level chairperson replied, "To make our lives hell." Britney and the others in attendance uttered grumblings of "wasting time," as they worked to fill in the five pages of boxes titled, Most Missed/Successful Objective Data Analysis, that asked for the following information:

1. What objective was most missed at your grade level?
2. What objective was missed for your classes?
3. What do you notice about how your students did in comparison to your grade level and in comparison to your other classes?
4. Based on what you noticed, what can you do differently instructionally for you classes? What would that look like? (Think about Marzano strategies—whole class instruction)
5. What do you need to reteach for?
6. When will/did you reteach?

7. What objective was most successful for your grade level?
8. What objective was most successful for your classes
9. What do you notice about how your students did in comparison to your grade level and in comparison to your other classes?
10. Which questions covered the most successful objectives
11. Which students missed the questions over your most successful objective? What skills do students have that enable them to do well with this successful objective?
12. How can you use these strengths to help them with their weaknesses
13. Make a list of your bubble kids
14. What is your plan for working with these students?
15. Who are your students that passed the TAKS last year that failed the CBA (Curriculum-based Assessment/district benchmark)?
16. What is your plan for working with these students?
17. What were three questions your grade level struggled the most with?
18. Why do you think they struggled with this question?
19. What is your plan for working with these students?
20. What were the three questions your classes struggled with the most?
21. What do you notice about how your students did in comparison to your grade level and in comparison to your other classes?
22. If there were dramatic differences in how your students in certain classes performed in comparison to either the grade level or other classes, what will your plan for that be?

These questions were intended to guide a reflective inquiry, and even though the teachers saw the value in looking at the missed objectives, the sheer magnitude of the paperwork was overwhelming, and according to the teachers, they felt that "this was a way for administration to keep an eye on them." Their words illustrated the power that they associated with the administration and created a sense of fearfulness in the teachers.

Through my involvement with the district as a Heart of Texas Writing Project Co-Director, I was aware of the district's engagement in curriculum revisions that stood in direct response to the state mandated tests and accountability measures. The focus of the curriculum centered on increased test scores. Whenever Britney blamed the district and

the curriculum for her stress and her students' inability to perform well, it was in response to the discourse of high stakes testing.

Britney experienced conflicting messages between the discourse of the summer writing institutes and the discourse of Central Office. During the institute, the group read chapter two from Fletcher's (1992) book, *What a Writer Needs*, titled, *Freezing to the Face*. The teachers responded to the text using dialectic journal entries—He says, I say. In Britney's first entry she wrote:

He Says:

1. *write to discover vs. use an outline (plan sheets)*

I Say:

1. *I understand this philosophy. I believe it. It is time-consuming and that is why it seems like my students don't learn anything. This theory is not embraced by many and I have really struggled w/it b/c our curriculum dictates something else—deadlines are concrete and objectives must be covered at certain times, even if it makes no sense at all.*

Her response highlighted the discord between the professional development that the district sanctioned and the lock-step curriculum they had recently created with the help of a professional consultant. The district paid the teachers stipends and provided them with summer writing institutes at the same time the district paid the teachers stipends to create documents that included genre requirements for each six-week grading period for each grade level. These required writings were prompt driven, and this practice ran counter to the philosophy of the Writing Project.

Two entries from Britney's notebook from the previous school year, one written one month prior to the test and the second written one week before the test, illustrated the

level of stress and frustration that Britney felt and the overwhelming power of the high stakes testing discourse. On January 30, 2007, she titled the entry, "Stressed Out" and wrote:

> *I've yelled and threatened all morning. My head hurts and my stomach is growling. I want these kids to pass this TAKS test so badly, my bones hurt. They are smarter than last year's group. I see no reason, other than laziness why they all can't get a three—okay, maybe not all of them, but most. I am going to box some of their ears if they don't get going and quit wasting time. If they would just apply themselves. Why is my back killing me? Why do I have bags under my eyes? This burden is sucking the life out of me. I need to teach a different level—like 6th grade. I feel this way every year—I just keep coming back for more, IDIOT!! I feel like a complete idiot! How do you teach 7th graders in 6 months how to write. A four paper on top of that !? I'm at a loss. I have run out of steam and I have 20 more days of this crap!*

Britney seemed to be at a breaking point. She referred to herself as an "idiot." Her words helped me see how the internally persuasive discourse of deficit thinking intersected with the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing. The two were intertwined and had Britney buried beneath their weight.

The language in the February entry was more subdued and left me feeling that Britney had given up. She wrote:

> *I struggle every day because I can't seem to inspire these kids to care about anything except drama and gossip. Many of them fake read, write letters all day long, and get everyone else stirred up. I don't have the resources to capture their attention not to mention I have to teach them using boring crap. I need new novels, more books, less stress and no TAKS test. I hate how I need to "change the world."*

Her voice indicated that Britney had given up believing she did not have the power to stand up to the pressures of a district that was benchmarking every six weeks. The pressures of the testing environment dominated discourse of her classroom and was

voiced in phrases such as, “When you are writing for the test…on the test…in March, you will be writing…we are doing this so you will do better on the test…”

The closer it came to the state test, Britney and the other seventh grade teachers ramped up their mini-lessons to include strategies they believed would help their students perform well on the test, such as a worksheet that included a graphic organizer with tips on how to add depth: “Add dialogue, add imagery and descriptive language like similes and metaphors, give specific details and descriptions, and use transition words and phrases.” The first box, titled “idea” provided a one and half inch by three-inch space for a picture. Three boxes followed below: “Detail, Deep, and Deeper.” The page ended with eight lines titled, “Write your paragraph here.” Other handouts included a one-pager with comma rules; a checklist titled, “Put Your Heart Into It” that included conjunctions, transition words, three super words, three connectors, one strong lead [word, definition, character, etc.], one simile, and two zoom sentences (must include five senses); and a page that directed the students to “Use your picture to create a ‘zoom’ paragraph. Describe your picture using each sensory column. Write your paragraph on the back.” Although Britney said she attended the four-day follow-up for more strategies to help her students become better writers, she did not incorporate any of them—not even the 3 X 3 that she said would be helpful.

As I perused Britney’s notebook entries from the institute, it was obvious that Britney had participated fully in all of the activities and had made additional comments using sticky notes such as “collecting quotes—cumulative,” “Read Around—Bring in something you love: poem, excerpt, lyrics,” “use as a writing entry,” to remind her how

and when to use the strategies. During the week before the test, Britney told me that she got so tired of helping the students by repeatedly asking, "What do you see, smell, and taste?" And at one point she said that it was tiring writing the sentences for them. Within this high stakes testing narrative, the impact of deficit thinking became clear. Britney had little faith in the students' ability to write on their own. And as a result, nothing she did would help them pass TAKS. She said, "I will be so glad when this test is over. I hate it."

Admittedly, after the writing test during the first week of March, Britney focused primarily on reading for the remainder of the school year in preparation for the state reading test in late April early May. Consequently there was little time devoted to writing in the spring. Interestingly, on the last day of the writing institute Britney wrote:

> *…we also focus solely on the narrative. Once February has passed, we focus on reading (which they score lower on than on writing) and almost never get back to writing on a whole. I hate that their creativity is stifled, they are forced to write in one genre and that my classroom never feels like a writing room. It is a reading room for sure—advertisements and all. When I want to branch out, I feel the stares of (others) and then hear "That's not in the curriculum, it's just fluffy." Well, that's the way I feel.*

It was evident that she had been frustrated with the limited writing opportunities and the forced emphasis on writing vs. reading based on the testing schedule for some time now. However, she apparently did not believe she possessed the agency required to stand up for what she believed because her words, "I feel the stares of others…" indicated she felt powerless over the curriculum.

I visited Britney's classroom the Monday after the test, and she mentioned that from this point on, reading was the focus with very little writing. As a seventh grade teacher there is no refuge from the test. Writing is tested in early March and reading is

tested in late April. She acknowledged and understood the connection between reading and writing, but she felt compelled and somewhat afraid that if she did not organize her year according to the districts' curriculum guides, her students would not do well. I think she also felt the pressure of the school culture—this is how it was at SGMS, and I would argue, at most schools in Texas.

Britney and Powerlessness

I first became aware of Britney's feelings of stress, discontent, and powerlessness in her personal and professional life during the summer institute. While listening to an editorial by Leonard Pitts, she collected the following bits of language during an activity called Eavesdropping: "stuff, poverty vs. plenty, race with no finish line, simplicity movement, and commercial culture." These phrases were bracketed off, and it wasn't until the next entry that I realized their significance. After reading *The Bee Tree* (Polacco, 1998), Sarah asked the group to write in response to the question, "Have you ever chased something?" Britney's next entry painted the picture of woman, like many people nearing the age of forty, reflecting on her life:

> *I think my whole life has been a chase. I'm always looking ahead trying to keep up. We have chased material possessions—"keeping up with the Jones's." I'm sick of chasing the newest fad, the biggest TV, the car to have right now. It has stressed me so much that I can't even breathe. Even when my children were little we chased the next stage—sleep thru the night (hey, I think I would still chase after that), sit-up, walk, "I can't wait to be out of diapers" (well, that's A+ too). I haven't savored anything in my life because I'm always chasing after more. I want to drop out of the race. I'm sick of sleepless nights, overwhelming dread, regrets from the past. I'm tired of searching for the "next best thing." I want to simplify, disengage, de-clutter. I want the freedom to <u>stand</u> <u>still</u> and know I have enough—more than enough. I'm sick of toys, gadgets, fast-fixes, spend now pay later crap! I'm sick of beating my head against the same brick wall, that gets*

> *higher and higher. I want to knock the wall down and "see my future!" Do with what you have—the gorilla needs to get off my back!*

This theme gained momentum as "stress" became the topic for her institute writing piece with the following list of items under the heading "STRESS" that Britney brainstormed: "TAKS test, picture of my homeroom class, my calendar, my checkbook, laundry basket, email address—school, lesson plan book, picture the copy machine at school, and Jack's [her son's] backpack." Her list contained items from both home and school and illustrated how the two were interconnected in her life. The generative writing and expanding the topic strategy culminated with this lead to her piece titled STRESS, "At 12:45 a.m. on August 16, the perpetrator STRESS broke open the seal of sleep, located at 207 E. 8th Street, Somerfield, TX. The owner, Britney Moore, awoke to the pounding of…" August 16th was the first day of school.

Not only did Britney write about her frustrations, but she also vocalized them. During one of the small group conversations, for example, she talked about her own children, a nine-year old son and six-year old twin daughters. She expressed feelings of futility at having and keeping something "nice" as she told the story about her daughter spilling milk on a leather purse that had been a gift from her aunt and another time when she found that her Willow figurine had been, in her words, "decapitated." Both had been gifts from her aunt, a special person to Britney. According to Britney, she did everything for the family, and they showed little appreciation.

As I mentioned in the story of writing institute, Britney expressed her dissatisfaction with the book, *Rikki Tikki Tavi* but continually dismissed Jule, the

librarian's encouragement to use a different a book restating three times, "You have the power." It was if the phrase had not been spoken. Then, during the school year, this feeling of powerlessness surfaced again when Britney expressed her anger toward her split block schedule. She stated, "I'm pissed—my schedule sucks/I always get a rotten split and this year, I have no breaks in the afternoon. I am exhausted by 3:00." I asked her about this dilemma and encouraged her to talk to the principal, but she shrugged as if there was no point. I encouraged her to stand up for herself, but she seemed to think such action was a futile endeavor.

During our first interview, Britney spoke about her unhappiness regarding her career choice and the reason she could not make a change while talking about her reasons for becoming a teacher. At one point Britney said, "Nobody ever tried to talk me out of it."

Perplexed by this comment, I asked, "Do you sometimes wish they had talked you out of it?"

"Oh gosh, yes," she replied. "If I could do this, and they would pay me, I mean really pay me, it would be rewarding. I'm not saying it's not rewarding. I'm just saying the paycheck is laughable." Britney then told me about her uncle who has a business degree and is very wealthy. "My aunt doesn't have to work and she shops all day," she said. Seeking his financial advice, Britney showed her uncle her paycheck.

He said, "I can't believe people. How do you survive?"

Britney responded, "…that's why I am sitting here because I don't know how we're going to survive."

At this point, her uncle added, “You couldn’t pay me that amount of money to even look at those kids much less teach them.”

And Britney replied, “I know.”

I asked her if she ever thought about changing careers and she said, “Every day. Isn’t that awful?” adding:

> …you know, after you put in what , where am I, about twelve, thirteen, you’re kind of stuck. I mean it’s like what, now what? I mean what can I do because you’re locked in with your retirement. I can’t get out of it and your age, and it’s like, so I tell people who are about two years in, I’m like you better make sure you want to do this because after about year five, you’re kind of stuck. You’re in it and you can’t get out.

She explained that she felt stuck because of her retirement fund and it would be like starting over to change careers. Admitting that teaching was a good profession for raising children, Britney could not understand why it had to be so stressful. When I asked what makes it stressful, she answered, “Piles and piles and piles and piles, and that [pointing to her computer], another email just popped up, and the copier is always broken.” She punctuated her sentiment saying, “The TAKS test makes you crazy.” She continued:

> ...you have to account for every minute of your day to prove that you need a conference period to prepare. If you’re not meeting with everybody so everybody can look at each other and make sure we’re all, there’s a reason why we need to have this period. When you’re thinking to yourself, I need to be in my room so I can grade those papers, get that run off, go ahead and put grades in the computer, sign all the you know athletic sheets that are sitting there and everybody needs their average and it’s like that’s what I really need to be doing not sitting here to prove that this time is utilized.

Britney’s words illustrated the financial worry in her personal life and how that affected her feelings toward her job as a teacher. Britney’s husband is a contractor, and with the recent downturn in the economy, her income is the most stable. She claimed she had too

much invested in terms of years toward her retirement as a reason to stay in a profession that caused of stress and fueled the negative dialogic discourse she so often expressed. This carried over into conversation with others and appeared to be influenced by the discourses of high stakes testing and deficit thinking and resulted in a feeling of powerlessness and therefore lacking of agency to make change. It was not clear which came first—personal stress influencing her professional life or the demands of the state and district on her professional life playing a role in her personal unhappiness, but this dialogic relationship did seem to prompt Britney to reflect on her life through talking and writing.

Across her story, it was evident that Britney was a reflective teacher who used her notebook to vent her frustrations and to say those things that she would not, or possibly could not, vocalize in other settings. In response to one of our conversations, Britney wrote about her comments to me:

> *I felt like I was very negative about teaching this morning in my interview w/ Lynn. I'm always looking for a new job. I feel taken advantage of; they keep piling on the junk that we have to do. The "Powers-to-be" have created an atmosphere of hopelessness and we are "jaded."*

Again, the word "power" surfaced. This time in reference to, what I believe, were the four levels of power that affected Britney's life—school (the principal), district (the superintendent), state (the State Board of Education), and the nation (No Child Left Behind). At the end of the entry, she retreated from the apology she was going to make for her negativity when she found out that the superintendent said the teachers at the middle school were not teaching vocabulary.

> *Are you kidding? He walks in a classroom for three minutes, once-a-month and determined that students aren't learning vocabulary…I wonder whose classrooms he visited…I can't believe that he can make such a gross generalization…Well, I was going to apologize for my attitude this morning, but after hearing how disappointed he was, I take it back. You can't draw a conclusion from seeing .00003% of the day.*

Clearly, Britney is a teacher who struggles to resolve the internal conflict she feels each day she comes to school, and her feelings of powerlessness are validated when district personnel such as the superintendent wield their power in such a way to render feelings of defeat among the teachers.

Conclusion

This was a story about Britney, a teacher who struggled to make sense of her world, the different identities she enacted, and the ways in which she dealt with the conflict between the authoritative discourses of the school, district, and state and the internally persuasive discourses of her lived experiences. This was a story of a teacher who came to school each day well planned and who wanted the best for her students. It was also a story about a teacher who felt trapped, and did not see a way out. Although many will say it is a sad story; it is a real story.

Britney said she wanted to add ideas to her practice, but she did not see how it was possible. She felt constrained by a curriculum driven by the demands of the test to write narratives and frustrated that she could not teach what she considered "creative writing" in different genres. Over the course of Britney's teaching career, the professional discourse centered on the state reading and writing test. As the stakes increased to include accountability ratings for schools and districts and culminated with the possibility of

student retention, most, if not all, professional development sanctioned by the district focused on increasing reading and writing scores—even the district's commitment to the Heart of Texas Writing Project was motivated by improving writing scores. Given this climate, HTWP did not really have a chance to make an impact on her teaching. As I considered Britney's teaching experiences, it became apparent that the discourses of high stakes testing and deficit thinking played a significant role in shaping her world (Johnstone, 2002) and the degree to which she was able to internalize the new knowledge from the institute for the inclusion in her practice.

Chapter 4: Sheila—A Story of Apprehension

It's so strange how I'm constantly trying to figure out my life and where it's going. It's not about me in this life!!! I need to forget control. It doesn't work anyway. I seem to be a slow learner when it comes to that.

(Sheila, March 2008)

This is a story about Sheila, a veteran teacher of thirty years who appeared to be a confident, teacher-in-charge. However, Sheila led a contradictory teaching life. Her "I'm the boss of this classroom" persona was disrupted as Sheila narrated her story as a teacher who was vulnerable and lacked confidence to try ideas that pushed her outside her comfort zone. It was difficult for Sheila to relinquish control and give up the structure she knew so well. This apparent lack of agency may be linked to her inexperience as a writing teacher, and although she had difficulty imagining herself as a writing teacher, Sheila had begun to author herself as one. However, at this time she may have not have been conscious of this authorship or the "awareness of [this] perspective in [her] constructed world" (Greene, 1988, p. 22 – 23). While her words depicted a classroom in which some change had occurred, her stated practice did not match her actual practice. Sheila's reluctance and fear of including new ideas in her classroom were eased when she worked side-by-side with Katherine, the language arts specialist who planned and co-taught in the classroom.

Over the course of the school year, it became evident that the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing as well as the internally persuasive discourses of her lived experiences diminished the impact of her experience in the institute. And, although Sheila did not make overt comments regarding her students' ability, her teacher-centered,

worksheet focused curriculum, fostered a climate in which the internally persuasive discourse of deficit thinking found its voice—complicating the change process for Sheila.

Prequel

Sheila grew up in Cranford, a small town of thirty-five hundred people, during the 1950s. Located on the northern edge of a military base in the central part of Texas, it sits approximately seventy miles northwest of San Gabriel. Today, it has tripled in size and continues to be home to Sheila's mother and father. Sheila, one of three children, has an identical twin and an older sister.

According to Sheila, her childhood was difficult. "My father was an alcoholic," she began, "and never got further than eighth grade. My mom got married at sixteen…but she did finish school." Reflecting on her childhood with her father, Sheila offered openly, "He came back from World War II with a metal plate in his head after a battle injury. Never really recovered…never really talked about it either." After leaving the service, he worked on the same military base for the next forty years moving and organizing ammunition. Although their relationship was strained due to his alcoholism, Sheila attributed her sense of humor to him and said:

> See that's the funny part. I think I'm very much like my dad and I, I mean my mother and I didn't want to be anything like my dad because I've just had such issues with him growing up. Lots of, you know, 'I wish he'd get killed by an eighteen wheeler coming home from work' type of stuff. But I think I've got my sick, sick humor from my dad and my playfulness from my dad.

Sheila characterized her mother as "the driving force of the family." When Sheila was in third grade, her mother took a job in the local factory that made skeletons for medical schools. Over the course of forty-years, she was eventually promoted to plant

manager as she worked to accomplish her goal to send her three children to college. Unlike her father, Sheila's mother never drank alcohol, and Sheila even referred to her as a "teetotaler." She described her mother as the "good parent" because "she was the safe one who took care of us;" however, her mother was still a strict disciplinarian, but not like her father. Sheila, with a bit of fear in her voice as she recollected her childhood said, "If you made him mad, you're going to get in trouble. If you mess up the newspaper, you're going to get into trouble. He was the disciplinarian." Revealing that her dad's personality changed when he drank, she said, "He could get angry. He could be mean." She went on to tell stories about two instances when they took him to the Veteran's Hospital due to his drinking and his psychological issues with the war. Sheila said, "It was always so nice when he was gone. Always so nice."

Sheila's story about her father and their relationship prompted her to admit that she blamed this experience for what she called her "anti-male" sentiments, as she told me:

> I think I developed such a deal about men because men were the ones that were never that good in my life, and sometimes if a male says something to me the wrong way, it's like a red flag in front of the bull. And I'm not even aware I'm taking on the issue until I'm in the middle of it so, and I've had to watch that dealing with male boys, you know because sometimes they want to really push your buttons and sometimes I'll come back at them really hard and it doesn't even phase them. It's kind of like, "I'm an eighth grade boy. You can't phase me." You know they're very resilient. I'm thinking if I say this to a girl, I might make her cry, but if I say it to a boy, he's going to like okay.

I asked her, "So do you find yourself maybe treating the boys a little bit differently than you do the girls?"

She replied:

> I think sometimes I'm harder on the boys, but I tend to pick on them and tease them, and I'll have boys come back sometimes and say, you are my favorite teacher. I'm like, "I tortured you. I picked on you." "No, you were funny. You made me laugh." We come at it from different ends, but it was strange how that would work out.

Sheila's relationship with her father helped shape her future relationships with men as well as the boys who were students in her class. As noted during Sheila's participation in the institute when she encountered a student who used his home life as a reason for being unprepared, she quickly shared her own experiences of growing up with an alcoholic father.

Our conversation moved from family to schooling, and we talked about her experiences in middle school English. Sheila's sixth grade English teacher was the most memorable. "She really sticks out in my mind, but she wasn't so much a writing teacher as a grammar teacher," Sheila told me. One strategy in particular has stayed with Sheila since that time, how to identify a preposition. "She taught me that most prepositions are 'anything you can do to a doghouse.' You can go through it, under it, around it. I use that how many years later because it made such a big impact on me." Writing was not a focus during middle school, and Sheila found it to "be a pain." Her feelings about writing did not change when she went to high school. The research paper, complete with note cards and sources, was the most notable writing assignment for Sheila in senior English. She referred to it as the "mother of all mothers" because you had to accomplish the feat to graduate. Based on her experiences, Sheila characterized writing in school as "sporadic and not continual." Although Sheila did not have the fondest memories of writing, she

completed the tasks as assigned and performed well in school. Talking about her experiences as a student, Sheila explained:

> I was a good student. Very good because that's where I found success—very much a teacher-pleaser. Went beyond the call of duty in doing whatever was asked of me. It if wasn't right, it wasn't done. Had to be perfect. I pushed myself more than other people push themselves. I was hard on myself in school especially in college. You know if I didn't get eight hours of studying in for a test, well you know, I wasn't going to be able to pass.

Given Sheila's inclination toward perfection, it was not surprising to hear that another memorable teacher was her seventh grade English teacher, Mrs. Carlson. "If you didn't dot i's, you got points off. If you didn't cross t's, you got points off…she was so picky," Sheila commented even though she thrived in classrooms that were managed in this way. Visualizing her classrooms from the late 1960s, Sheila said, "It was nothing like the classrooms today," and went on to describe the interaction between the teacher and the students:

> The teacher would come in and run everything, and there were no small groups and you never worked with a partner. You were given instructions and she might talk a little bit and had some practice to do. And you might go over the practice, and then you'd have some homework to deal with, but the teacher was fully in charge of everything.

What I did not know at the time, but what soon became apparent through my classroom observations, was that Sheila's description of her junior high school experience, with the exception of small groups and pairs of students working together, was similar to the way she positioned herself in her own classroom.

After graduating from Cranford High School, Sheila and her sister fulfilled their mother's dream that they would attend college. Sheila and her twin enrolled in a private

university located within an hour's distance from their home. Sheila said, "We went as a set. We went on scholarships and grants and loans." They left home together, roomed together throughout college, and it wasn't until graduation that they went their separate ways. While in college, Sheila studied to become a business teacher and minored in English. After graduation, she taught business and English classes in a high school near the university. She eventually secured her certification in Special Education and taught in the women's prison system for seven years. Sheila came to San Gabriel in 1989. At this time, the district had separated reading from writing, so Sheila taught reading, while Ann, her colleague, taught writing. In 2001, the district implemented a language arts block in which the teachers would teach both reading and writing through a workshop approach during a ninety-minute "block" of time.

Sheila has been married for over thirty years. She and her husband are the parents of twin girls and interestingly, so are Sheila's twin sister and her husband. In 2009, Sheila's twin joined the eighth grade team at San Gabriel Middle School, and is now a colleague. Sheila and her sister are once again "a set."

Sheila's Story

Two days after my interview with Britney, I headed back to San Gabriel to meet with Sheila. I arrived at the middle school a few minutes before the bell rang signaling the end of second period, so I quietly entered the classroom and took a seat in one of the empty desks near the door. Sitting on a stool in the front of the class, Sheila wrapped up class-time and passed on information that had been sent from the office. The bell rang and a few students stood up, but she quickly looked at them, peering over her reading

glasses that sat low on her nose, indicating she would be the one to dismiss the class, not the bell. The students took their seats. In a matter of seconds, she said, "You may leave," and the students stood up and left the room in an orderly fashion. This description of the moment may make Sheila seem as if she did not have a sense of humor, but quite the opposite was true. Always impeccably dressed, Sheila was a witty, fun-loving person who could be sarcastic at times. It became apparent as the year progressed that she used sarcasm as a way to connect with the students.

Dressed in a brown suede jacket, suede skirt with blocks of colors—green, orange, light blue, brown, lilac, light green, and pink and wearing a hot pink turtleneck sweater that matched the color in her skirt, Sheila portrayed an image that contrasted the often casual wardrobe of slacks worn by many of the teachers. Her brown boots with heals made her appear taller than the petite woman of 5'2" that she was, and her short brown hair was cut in a current style, highlighted and coiffed. I came to learn that Sheila had many pairs of reading glasses; each pair coordinated with her outfit that day. Over the course of the year, Sheila was always dressed in a businesslike manner. Even on days when jeans and T-shirts were the norm, she maintained her look with matching necklaces, bracelets, and earrings, and of course her reading glasses.

Hopping down from her stool, she motioned for me to join her at the small table located in the back of her classroom, and said, "Let's meet back here." Like Britney's first interview, our conversation would serve the same purpose, to learn about Sheila's teacher preparation program, her teaching biography, and her reasons for attending both the two-week summer writing institute, *San Gabriel Writes 2006* and the four-day

follow-up institute, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*. I was also interested to learn if she had included some of the ideas from either or both of these professional learning experiences in her current practice and the challenges she faced as a writing teacher.

As I mentioned earlier, Sheila's teaching fields were business and English. Based on her daughter's experience as an education major today, Sheila thought her teacher education program was quite different. "I don't think we were prepared as teachers when we came out. There was not a big push for writing," she said. After college, Sheila taught business classes at the high school, but returned to the university to earn her certification in special education and eventually taught reading in the prison system for seven years. For twenty-three of her thirty years in the classroom, she had taught either business, reading, or special education for students from eighth grade to adulthood. She said:

> And so I'd been predominately in reading classes, and until we blocked a few years ago, I…wasn't an English teacher. So when we incorporated, then that really became my first time to get into the writing experience more and more. Writing was not part of my world.

In this sense, Sheila was actually a novice teacher when it came to writing. She had only taught the writing portion of the curriculum for five years prior to coming to the first institute, *San Gabriel Writes 2006*.

Before San Gabriel ISD restructured the middle school language arts curriculum into a block configuration, Sheila described her partnership with her colleague, Ann, "We had so many reading teachers and so many English teachers, totally separate worlds—totally separate. Ann did the writing. I did the reading." The only writing that occurred in the reading class was "lit log" entries in which the students responded to questions posed

by Sheila that applied to what they had read. “We did a lot of lit logging in reading. We didn’t do journaling. We were very limited. Very limited,” Sheila said in a voice that indicated she felt some remorse for the setting and later added, “And of course when you look back on some of this, it looks really strange that we did it the way we did it.” When I asked her to tell me more about her feelings, she said:

> I guess we felt like we had a curriculum to follow and writing was not stressed in reading. The big thing was to get the reading scores up and you didn’t think about, “Well, I’m going to have them write to do that.” [chuckling] You know we’re going to read, read, read, read, read. And it was not a part of our philosophy.

Sheila’s reference to “philosophy” struck me as significant because as I spent more time with her, it seemed that the big change for Sheila may not have been the addition of strategies and the change to a workshop structure, but rather the beginnings of a change in the way she thought about writing instruction.

In 2001, the newly adopted block schedule was met with some resistance from the teachers at the middle school. Sheila explained, “People were worried about how they were going to pick up the writing if they were reading and vice-versa…it was painful.” The teachers soon adjusted to the new schedule and began to feel a sense of calmness during three, ninety-minute periods in contrast to the hectic pace of seven, forty-five minute sessions. Sheila described the scene as teachers who were “running for their lives in forty-five minute periods,” and welcomed having some “breathing time” that the block afforded her. She quoted a colleague who said, “The very thing we fought the hardest against was the very thing we needed the most. We didn’t realize that until we were pushed into it.” With this change, Sheila began her journey as a language arts teacher.

For the five years prior to attending *San Gabriel Writes 2006,* Sheila and one other colleague on the eighth grade team focused on teaching grammar for the writing portion of the block. When asked to describe what the writing instruction looked like, Sheila admitted, "Minimum, extremely minimum. It was predominately grammar." According to Sheila, the students worked from the grammar book and completed the exercises from each chapter, and then she said,

> Writing was something we might do once-a-six weeks, some kind of project, but it was isolated. I didn't feel like we were writing at all. And I really felt like this is totally incompetent. We're not getting anything accomplished this way.

Thus, Sheila stated her reason for attending the first summer institute, *San Gabriel Writes 2006*, "We were doing too much grammar, and I knew it wasn't working. You can teach grammar until you're blue in the face, and they wouldn't necessarily pick it up and retain it."

During the three years before attending the writing institute, Sheila taught across the hall from the third member of the eighth grade team, Katherine. Katherine, a third-year teacher at the time, and a new teacher on the team, worked to create a classroom that embraced a reading/writing workshop. She had been invited to participate in the Heart of Texas Writing Project's Summer Invitational Writing Institute in 2004 and returned to school energized to continue the process. Katherine openly shared ideas with the team and was successful in expanding Sheila and Ann's reading curriculum to include book clubs. As an advocate for writing workshop and teaching grammar in the context of the students' writing, Katherine worked with her students in a way that differed from Sheila and Ann. Katherine did not try to force her ideas on her colleagues, but based on Sheila's

comment regarding her interest in attending the writing institutes, it appeared Sheila had seen something she liked:

> All these abstract pages or papers we were doing, and I heard a lot about writing in the classroom, writers' notebook and that type of stuff, and I thought that sounds a lot more productive to have children *writing* everyday rather than looking at grammar everyday.

Sheila's relationship with Katherine, who later became the literacy specialist on the campus as well as one of the facilitators for *San Gabriel Writes 2006,* grew into a mentor/mentee bond, and their conversations eventually revealed Sheila's fear of trying new ideas in her classroom that will be told later in this story.

Rather than naming a strategy or activity, Sheila's recollection of memorable ideas from the institute seemed to return to the notion of a philosophy when she said, "Oh, how much kids need to write, you know, so much more than what we were doing and how it becomes a way of life." She expressed her hope that one day her writing time would look like reading time where her students would pick up their writing like they pick up a library book. The inclusion of a writers' notebook in her curriculum had the biggest impact on Sheila, and she incorporated its use the following school year. "Everybody got a notebook. They didn't use it everyday. I think the first semester we used it four times a week, and I felt better about it [writing]." Following the suggestions of the facilitators, Sheila tried to organize the notebook with rules in the back and a table of contents, commenting:

> We didn't do very much at all. We tried to do a table of contents. We didn't come back to finish that at all. So it was mostly free-writes or something I might have given them to think about and let them write about. So it was very simple. By the

> end of the year, we hadn't even used half of it, so I knew we had not been, you know, effective in doing it.

Although Sheila thought her efforts were not as effective as she had hoped, she said, "I felt a lot more productive…just knowing that the kids were actually writing everyday." Similar to Britney; however, the pressure to prepare for TAKS resulted in the notebook "getting pushed aside," during the spring semester. For Sheila, it meant that the emphasis would be on reading to ensure her students' success on the state mandated reading test. Promotion to ninth grade was tied to this assessment given in late March, so Sheila gave up the writers' notebook in order to, in her words, "…do these strange skills sometimes in order to cover our tracks that we had covered everything." From our conversation, it was apparent that Sheila was conflicted by abandoning the notebook in the spring. Determined not to let this happen again, she told me she returned for the four-day follow-up, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* "to get some more of the same information." However, the most revealing comment Sheila made referenced an equally significant event: her teammate, Ann, had attended a two-week institute in the summer of 2007, conducted for teachers who had not participated the previous year. She said, "I think what's made the big difference other than the four days is that Ann went to San Gabriel Writes." Having Ann's support meant that Sheila was not alone when they created their lesson plans, and the inclusion of the writers' notebook became an expectation rather than an option, but it did not make it any easier to teach writing.

As mentioned earlier, Sheila had an inclination toward perfection and according to her, "Writing is not cut and dry. It's different for every student. What works for one

kid, won't work for another." She contrasted the difficulty of teaching writing to the ease of teaching reading saying:

> Their differences in topics and what their interests are, finding what they're willing to talk about or not talk about. It's just not, it's not a cut and dry thing. You can tell them, well go get…go find a book that you really want to read, and if you don't find it, I'll help you, and we'll look until we do. You can't do that in writing because you can give them things to read and to look and model, but you can't pull that out of their brains and make them put it on paper.

Sheila had difficulty finding a way to organize what I refer to as "the messy process of writing." Her biggest challenge was "getting a kid to write who doesn't want to write," she said and then added:

> Giving a kid an idea that says there's nothing to write about. I know we've talked about doing this, you know, using the writer's notebook. Go back and look at what you've talked about, and in some ways that's a lot better than what it used to be. We'd be pulling our hair out. 'Were you born in a foreign country?' We just went the whole gamut, but at least now if I feel like with the writer's notebook, we have a tool that they can go back. Say this is what you wrote about. You must have been interested in some of it. So I think that's going to help with when you get to the where they say there's nothing to write about. We go no, no, no and I think that's the purpose also of writing everyday is to give them more ideas, kind of like a bank for them to go and you know instill their ideas and then they go back okay, let's check them out. So I think that's also, I think in a lot of ways the writer's notebook is a lot, it's not just one tool for one thing. It can be used in lots of ways. And some kids will say, what are we going to do with we fill them up? Well we'll get another one. But you know I have a feeling some kids are really going to be you know I'm going to take this home and keep it because to them it's very much a record of a great life from what some of them have written in there.

Sheila's description of the way in which she drew on the strength of her teammates as well her use of the writers' notebook in her classroom painted a landscape where students were engaged in writing and talking about their notebook entries. Sheila mentioned that she wanted the students to go back into their notebooks and look for

patterns and write a longer piece but admitted that this had not happened yet. It was November. To hear Sheila talk about her classroom and what she learned in the institute, it appeared as if she was "trying on" the discourse of writing pedagogy but was not yet ready to enact the curriculum as taught in either of the summer writing institutes.

Our conversation carried out into the hallway as we discussed when I would begin my observations. Standing and visiting at the door of her classroom, Sheila simultaneously greeted her students as they entered for fourth period. Before I left, I glanced back into the room and saw each student gather their books and materials from the carefully organized shelves. From their actions, it appeared they were well versed in the structure of the class. The bell was about to ring, and Sheila beckoned the few remaining students in the hall to come to class. She turned, smiled, and followed them through the door. Fourth period had begun.

Sheila's Classroom

When I returned for my first classroom observation, I sat down at the table near Sheila's desk and remembered how warm and comfortable her room felt during her interview. With hanging plants at the windows, and a rich, soothing blue color painted on two of the walls, her classroom stood in contrast to the institutional white-painted cinderblock hallway and classrooms on this wing at the middle school. Sheila's room was organized and decorated in a way that gave the feeling of "home." With the same attention to detail that Sheila presented in her personal appearance, her room matched her personality. The addition of color was Sheila's latest improvement to her classroom and complemented the color palette of the small black check fabric covered bulletin boards as

well as the café valance that ran the length of the windows across the back of the classroom. Sheila carried a Mary Engelbreit[3] theme throughout the room including cherry borders that surrounded the charts for classroom rules and consequences. Across the top of one whiteboard, posters with the literary elements were carefully positioned on a piece of black and white polka dot fabric. Over the adjacent whiteboard, Sheila added a black and white polka-dotted, scalloped border to each poster representing the different parts of speech.

Large gold letters that spell R-E-A-D hung on the wall above the black painted bookcases filled with books. Another set of bookcases ran the length of the wall to the right of the door that held hundreds of additional books, alphabetized by author, for students to read during sustained silent reading time (SSR). Adding to the organized nature of her room, Sheila placed plastic crates on their sides across the top of these bookcases for the students to keep their binders and writers' notebooks. Sitting toward the back of the room, Sheila's desk, wrapped with black and white check table cloth material to form a skirt, as well as her personal space was defined by more bookcases. Each shelf, backed with large black and white check paper, was organized with everything in its place—pencils in cups, cleaning supplies arranged neatly in a caddy and paper towels in a row. A red, wooden, decorator shelf with drawers hung on the wall behind her desk. With a plant and books on the shelf, iron sconces on either side, and her diploma and other pictures framed and hung on the wall above, the arrangement was an

[3] "Mary Engelbreit is known throughout the world for her distinctive illustration style, imbued with spirited wit and nostalgic warmth" (maryengelbreit.com). Her drawings are recognizable through her use of black and white check patterns and the use of saturated colors.

example of Sheila's fastidious attention to detail. Rather than rows of desk facing the front of the room, Sheila arranged the room with desks on either side, so one group of students faced the other group. Four rows with three desks in each row were arranged on either side of the classroom with Sheila's teaching area that included a podium and a table that held supplies in between the two student sections. The whiteboard behind her space was used for the agenda for both groups of students she taught, "regular" eighth grade language arts, and "pre-AP" eighth grade language arts. The corner of the room to the left of Sheila's teaching space was reserved for the reading corner, and included a black vinyl armless sectional that wrapped the entire corner with an area rug that provided more space for students to sit. During SSR, students took turns having access to this space. As I looked in each direction, there was evidence that reading dominated Sheila's curriculum. With the exception of the initials, "WNB" (writers' notebook) written on the agenda, there were no other signs that writing had a prominent place in the classroom experiences.

Meticulously organized and decorated, Sheila had created the type of classroom space she needed in order to feel successful in her practice, and this organization remained consistent with the ways in which she structured each day's learning experiences for her students.

Sheila's Teaching

> *I'm always amazed and astonished by how much more I can accomplish in a day when I'm following a set routine or structured day. I get out of bed earlier, stay focused on what needs to be done, and accomplish the tasks at hand. The bed gets made, the dogs get fed, laundry is put away, and I'm dressed and ready to tackle the day.*

This entry from Sheila's writers' notebook, written during *San Gabriel Writes 2006* provided insight into the way she organized the classroom experiences for her students. The sense of accomplishment that Sheila tied to "following a set routine" could be seen in her teaching as well. Planned and organized, with materials ready and the daily agenda written on the board, I noticed that each day I spent in Sheila's class was similar to the day before. Her students followed the order of each day and rarely, if ever, strayed off course. Beginning in early December 2007 and continuing through May 2008, I observed Sheila's classroom during her first and second period block. This was her "regular" language arts class consisting of nineteen students, fourteen boys (six Latino, seven White, and one African-American) and five girls (two Latina, two White, and one African-American). Following a teacher-centered model for instruction, Sheila facilitated the time in class from beginning to end.

On a visit in early February, after the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence, Sheila drew the students' attention to the daily agenda written on the board and then directed the group to begin SSR. Reading self-selected text that included novels, nonfiction, and magazines, the students read for approximately twenty-five minutes today and every day. The following agenda was written on the board:

2-4-08
ELA

1. Binders/agenda
2. SSR
3. WNB [*Writers' Notebook*]
    a. freewrite
    b. Do we have any social groups in our school like "socs" or "greasers?" Name and describe the ones we have.

4. The Outsiders—Chapter 4
5. Quiz over chaps. 3-4
6. Assign Part I voc. words. Test is FRIDAY!
7. Commas—in a series and compound sentences—worksheets 21-22
8. HW [*homework*]—WB [*workbook*] 193-194—195A

This agenda was similar to the days prior to this visit and the days that followed, and I noticed that the items on the agenda contradicted our conversation regarding one of her reasons for attending the two summer writing institutes, to change the way in which she approached grammar instruction. Over time, skill-based worksheets for both English and reading such as "Compare/contrast sheet," "Check English—HW 288-290," "Compound/Complex sentences p. 144 – 145," were a central part of the agenda and consequently occupied quite a bit of time during the block. Although there was time for writing in their notebooks, it constituted a small part of the daily activities, often lasting less than five to seven minutes, with few if any students sharing their writing. There was no evidence that the students had gone back through their entries to develop a draft and work on crafting a final piece of writing.

After SSR, Sheila said, "Get out your writers' notebook, please. You may free write or 'Do we have any social groups…'" While the students wrote, Sheila passed out the Language Network workbooks in preparation for the lesson on commas in a series that would follow reading chapter four of *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967). I noticed that Sheila did not write in her notebook along with the students but took care of the attendance and organized the work for the day. She told me later that she wrote with her students, "sometimes, but not always." As I looked around the room, all of the students

were writing. After four minutes some had finished and waited quietly for Sheila to say, "Stop," while others were still writing. Sheila's question, "Anyone want to share what they've written?" signaled the end of writing time, and Monica, an African-American girl, offered, "The blacks with blacks, Mexicans with Mexicans." Sheila restated Monica's comment and since no other hands were raised, she quickly moved the class to the next activity, reading chapter four of *The Outsiders* without commenting further on Monica's contribution. This same pattern of response repeated itself during my observations. One, two, or sometimes the same small group of students shared their responses but often none shared, and then Sheila would move to the next activity. Although she consistently had the students writing in their notebooks, Sheila struggled to engage the students in sharing their writing. She would ask one or two times if someone wanted to share, and when no one volunteered, Sheila proceeded with her agenda. Moving quickly from one activity to the next during the class period, Sheila seemed more intent on a strict adherence to the plan for that day and managed time accordingly.

As Sheila asked, "What happened in chapter three?" the students took out their copies of *The Outsiders*, and several students summarized the events. Sitting on her stool at the front and middle of the two sections of student desks, Sheila turned on the tape to begin the reading of chapter four. With her novel in one hand and tape recorder within close reach of the other hand, she segmented the reading into two to five minute sections with the push of the on/off button. At key points, determined by Sheila, she stopped the tape and asked questions such as, "How did we know this was going to happen; what was foreshadowed?" "Why do you think they turned to Dally?" "Why was Johnny laughing at

Tony?" and when students did not give the answer she was looking for, she encouraged the students to "Look back." After directing the class to turn to a specific page and reread, Sheila was usually satisfied with their responses.

At the completion of chapter four, Sheila turned off the tape and passed out the worksheet, *Quiz Time* from Teacher Created Resources, Inc., that required the students to write a one paragraph summary of chapters three and four and then answer the ten comprehension questions. In a move that ran counter to her description of her personal experiences in school, she offered the choice of working with a partner to complete the task. After ten minutes and what appeared to be her need to stay on schedule, Sheila said, "Okay, finish up your papers. We need to move on."

Throughout my time in Sheila's classroom, the grammar lesson came after the reading lesson and followed the same pattern of interaction with the students. With the worksheet, *Commas: Series and Compound Sentences*, on each desk, Sheila asked a student, "Will you read that first bullet at the top?" The student complied by reading the rule for using a comma in a series. "Okay, read the second bullet," she said, and a different student read aloud the rule for compound sentences. Afterwards, students took turns reading the twenty-four sentences aloud, inserting the commas in the correct place as Sheila directed the responses, "Jose, read two. Number three, Charles. Where would you put the commas? Good. Number four? Right, good. Number five? Yes, good deal," this pattern continued through number twenty-four with the students adding commas to the sentences and was followed with a homework assignment of three additional workbook pages on comma usage. Four days later, Sheila gave the class a "comma test,"

that included nineteen sentences that required the students to "Place a comma where needed" and warned, "Some sentences may have more than one comma rule in them. READ CAREFULLY!" When I returned a week later, I noted that the grades ranged from a low of forty-five to a high score of eighty-three. There were no A's, three B's, five C's, and ten who failed, and I watched as Sheila called out the correct answers, the students made the corrections, and then turned the tests back in for more points.

Sheila's stated practice and her enacted practice. It was moments such as the ones described above that disrupted Sheila's story about the ways in which her practice had changed since attending the two institutes. Based on my observations, the students played a passive role, generally speaking only in direct response to Sheila's questions or directions. However, Sheila believed that the daily use of the writers' notebook, even in what appeared to be a limited capacity, made a significant difference in her writing curriculum. And given the structure of her classroom, it was understandable how these small moments of writing each day were a significant change for Sheila and her classroom practice.

Sheila's classroom operated smoothly and directly reflected the things that were important to Sheila in her own life—organization, efficiency, and diligence in completing her tasks during the workday. However, her enacted practice differed from the way she described the scene. As noted in Chapter Two, Sheila, on the first day of the four-day follow-up institute, described her writing classroom in the following way:

> *Students are hunkered down (eagerly & reluctantly) writing in their composition notebooks. Some are attacking the notebook with zeal and others are lollygagging. Many times I write with them, and this seems to help keep them on*

> *task if I participate as well. It usually proceeds smoothly and quietly, especially when it's a free write. I was surprised how many kids really got into writing and looked forward to doing it. Several students wanted to share and, of course, some students never wanted to share. But nearly everyone was interested in what someone had written and was eager to listen. Some very interesting conversations came from their writing, and you were able to see different sides of students that were kept hidden. I was always amazed at what some of them would share with others. Students in this day and age are very bold, and it comes out in their writings. Their writings really helped me to better understand them and what some~~one~~ of them were experiencing in their home lives. Students were also more receptive about practicing grammar when they could apply it to their own writing. That was a nice change!*

While some of what Sheila said matched my observations such as her use of the phrases, "hunkered down, " and "attacking the notebook with zeal" coupled with comments such as, "…everyone was interested in what someone had written and was eager to listen," her description ran counter to my observations and interpretations of the classroom. The discrepancy between stated and enacted teaching practice speaks to the ways teachers make changes to their practice. From Sheila's writing, it was evident that her perceptions of her practice as well as the way she spoke about her practice aligned with the philosophy of the writing project; however she did not seem ready to fully actualize these ideas. In particular, the reference to her students being, "more receptive about practicing grammar when they could apply it to their own writing." From this statement, it appeared that Sheila had knowledge of this practice but rarely acted on it. Although I did not see the students go back to their writer's notebooks for grammar instruction, Sheila told me:

> We try. We're talking about similes and metaphors. 'Okay, let's to back in to your writer's notebook. Pick an entry. Let's see if you can just, you know, pull out somewhere where you can say…my dad was as big as cow or whatever. Put it in it,' and so we use the writer's notebook to do that and to me that just feels more

normal. And I'm thinking it's got to feel more normal to the kids.

Though Sheila spoke about reentering the notebook, grammar worksheets and assigning homework from the English workbook remained the primary method of teaching.

As I thought about Sheila and the types of writing experiences she created for her students, I was struck by the similarities between her classroom and the one she personally experienced in middle school. My observation left me perplexed because it seemed as if Sheila did not recognize the resemblance between the two. Voicing the irony during our first meeting, she said, "The only way they're really similar is that, you know, I'm the teacher, but I'm not in charge." Although Sheila thought the interaction pattern differed from her personal school experiences, it looked like she was indeed in charge of her classroom and orchestrated a tightly structured business-like environment.

Incorporating something new—small group instruction. The 2006-2007 school year began with an initiative to incorporate small group learning into the curriculum at San Gabriel Middle School and San Gabriel High School. Katherine, the literacy specialist, played a significant role in Sheila's learning as they worked to include this structure into her classroom. Sheila trusted Katherine, and they worked well together on projects such as these. While at times she voiced her frustration with the central office administration, TAKS, and some of the mandated professional development, her feelings did not negatively impact her teaching life or her relationship with her students. And so, with guarded optimism, Sheila undertook small group instruction, primarily on reading skills, in response to the state mandated reading test given in late March of each year.

Staying consistent with her style, Sheila's small group instruction looked similar to her whole group instruction. It was worksheet focused with Sheila directing the talk. However, working with the small groups created a more personal setting that fostered more conversation among the students and deeper explanations by Sheila. One day when I visited her classroom, Sheila prepared the class to work independently while she met with small groups. After assigning a worksheet on chapter seven of *The Outsiders* and a character template that asked the students to identify a character and then list characteristics with textual evidence to support their claim, Sheila called for the first group, consisting of four boys, to meet her at the table. She began by passing around a worksheet titled, *Forward and Back* that focused on the literary elements of foreshadowing and flashback and said, "We're going to talk about a skill. It was the second most bothersome skill…on the last test we took, and it was over symbols, foreshadowing, and flashback…Anyone want to read that first paragraph?"

"I will," Sean volunteered, and he began to read the description of foreshadowing written at the top of the page.

"Okay, underline the second sentence that reads, 'Foreshadowing is the use of clues to suggest something is going to happen.' Have we had any foreshadowing in The Outsiders?" Sheila asked. And the students offered several examples from the story. Tommy read the next paragraph on flashback, and again this generated quite a bit of talk as Sheila offered an extended explanation and drew their attention to the word "back." The students soon gave examples not only from *The Outsiders*, but also from movies and other books. Comments such as, "the movie *Waterhorse*, where they start off not telling

you the whole story," "And Stephen King always uses flashbacks," found a place in the talk. Unlike her whole group instruction, there were many moments in the small group in which the students engaged in conversation with Sheila, making connections to their world outside of school. However, Sheila's method of instruction remained similar as it was spent with the students taking turns reading aloud parts of a story listed on the worksheet, labeling them with the correct term, and telling Sheila why they chose a specific label. They completed one more worksheet on symbols and after Sheila provided a recap of the lesson, the group was dismissed after twenty minutes.

Sheila's willingness to incorporate small group instruction into her practice could be attributed to her relationship with Katherine. Over the year that I spent in her classroom, Sheila often expressed her gratitude for the support Katherine offered. With respect to the effectiveness of professional development structures, it appeared that Sheila benefitted more working side-by-side in a coaching relationship rather than spending four days at *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* that was decontextualized from her classroom.

Sheila's Apprehension Toward Change

Sheila credited Katherine's work for the progress she made toward the inclusion of small groups into her lesson plans and also felt supported by the fact that the other teachers on her team were using them as well. On several occasions, she spoke about her apprehension to try a new idea with her students and often voiced that there was "safety in numbers," referring to Ann, her teammate, who had just attended *San Gabriel Writes 2007*. In a conversation midway through the second semester, I asked Sheila about her

parting reflection from the last day of *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* in which she wrote about the strategies she thought she would try to use in the upcoming school year:

> *My hopes are to truly incorporate the writer's notebook in my classes this year and not just be strong the first semester. Also a good result from the continued use of the notebook, and this needs to be continued every day in class. I'm considering the use of the three by three strategy, the Crayola exercise, the museum exhibit and Tri-Ten. These are foremost on my mind, but I also plan to use the rubric for writer's notebook. I get lots of good practical ideas to try. I've got practical okay. I'm concerned about moving away so much from direct teach grammar, but I see more and more how unproductive this is. I can adjust, but I'm concerned about other grade level teachers hanging on to grammar for dear life. This will be a challenge.*

After I shared this, Sheila quickly added, "And that changed. The ones hanging on let go because they went through the first San Gabriel Writes…she's no longer hanging on like she used to." Speaking about her colleague, Ann, Sheila emphasized the importance of having a shared experience with others on the team and said, "…once you got more teachers into the workshop, San Gabriel Writes, then it made a big difference on whether or not things were accepted or not accepted. And it just made a big difference."

Based on the way she spoke about her experiences in both of the summer writing institutes, what may have appeared as little change in practice, may actually have been a big change for Sheila. She added:

> Well, it's interesting how it changes people's thinking about things. You know, you can talk about it in a planning period, or "let's try this, or let's try that." You go to a two-week conference, and you hear all this information and see what results with it—it's all of a sudden a whole new ballgame than just what somebody said next door, "Let's try that."

Empowered by shared knowledge with colleagues, Sheila's experience illustrated how important it was for her to have a common language as well as common goals to try something new in her classroom.

For thirty years, Sheila had taught in a way that differed from the kind of classroom interaction suggested by the Writing Project. The internally persuasive discourse of her lived experiences, such as the voices of her parents and teachers that were once authoritative, came in contact with the discourse of the institute. The dialogic interplay resulted in Sheila's ability to begin to use the language of the institute as she described her evolving practice. Each moment of talk in the two institutes bumped up against a set of persuasive discourses that formed part of Sheila's beliefs about teaching and learning. It was understandable that Sheila approached this new space she hoped to create with some trepidation. For example, we talked about planning for writing instruction. When I asked her about taking an entry from the writers' notebook through the writing process, Sheila offered that this would be possible if "they sat down as an eighth grade department to say, "Here's what we're going to do," She emphasized the importance of "bouncing ideas off of each other," and the opportunity to share what did not work. However, Sheila did not "feel comfortable to go-it-alone."

"Aloneness" was not the only feeling that hindered Sheila's changing practice. When I mentioned the photo essay lessons she had planned with Katherine but had not used, her response illustrated her vulnerability and contradicted her image as a person who was in charge of her classroom:

> It was so much to try to, for me to process, and if I can't relate across to the kids, I didn't feel like I was going to be able to get across to them. So then I was going to be stuttering, stammering, and well no, I don't really know what to expect because I've never done it. If I've done something, then I always tell the kids "Hey, I did the same thing. I know you're going through a tough time trying to get ideas because I had to do the same thing." So I think because I had not experienced it, and I didn't see all the ramifications with it, I didn't feel comfortable doing it. And there was no need going forward if I was just going to be frustrated with it.

Sheila's words were consistent with her inclination toward perfection. When faced with a new teaching/learning experience and the possibility of an unpredictable outcome, she was not comfortable taking the risk in front of her students. In addition, she shared her concern about her apparent lack of knowledge regarding the use of the digital cameras and voiced her need to experience the activity first in order to have the knowledge to guide the students to avoid, as she stated, "floundering in the dark with them." Referencing Ann, her teammate, Sheila said:

> I think Ann and I are a lot alike in that way—that we have to have experienced it, gone through it, handled it, or whatever, before we can feel like we can turn around and sell it to the kids.

And soon after the state mandated reading test, Sheila followed through on carrying out a writing activity that she had "experienced, gone through, and handled," and is described in the next section.

More adventurous after testing. Although Sheila abandoned the photo essay, she met with Katherine in late spring to co-plan and co-teach a writing unit, *This I Believe* essays. Sponsored by National Public Radio (NPR), and "based on a 1950s radio program of the same name, Americans from all walks of life share the personal philosophies and core values that guide their daily lives" (npr.org). Inspired from a

session at The Heart of Texas Writing Project's Winter Conference, Sheila was willing to try what she had experienced in the workshop. With Katherine's help, they followed the teaching sequence as suggested by the facilitator and utilized the middle school curriculum provided by NPR on their website. It was the week after the state mandated reading test and Sheila expressed feeling more comfortable using time in class for writing.

Pulling a cart full of materials for the unit that included sample essays, several editions of *This I Believe* books, and audiotapes of essays, Katherine entered Sheila's classroom. They sat across from each other and talked about the different ways they could move forward with this writing assignment. From my observation, it seemed as though Katherine had done all of the planning and provided the materials for Sheila. Sheila listened while Katherine explained. They talked about the different texts they would use as well as how the essays would be assessed. At one point, Sheila said, "Wow, you have done a lot of work on this."

Katherine replied, "Well, I am really excited about it." Katherine had everything typed up, laid out, run off, and planned. They decided to read, watch, and listen to examples of essays to give the students some ideas about what this genre looked like and sounded like. Over the course of the next three weeks, Sheila and Katherine co-taught the unit with much success. Some days they worked together in the class, while other days Sheila worked alone. They read essays from the books, modeled writing using mentor texts, listened to other student writers read their essays, and held conferences with the students.

After the unit was completed, I asked, "How do you think their essays turned out?"

"Not as good as I want them, but they came up with some pretty heavy subjects," she said. They wrote about "choosing who your father is going to be instead of just getting somebody, paying your own way, and about going to college." I noted that Sheila thought the students had to do "more in-depth thinking than what they were used to" in order to write about these topics and there was a sense of accomplishment in her voice as we talked.

Sheila compared working with Katherine to attending a workshop off-campus and said:

> Well, working with Katherine is just so hands-on. You know we were taking it a step at a time, but I never felt like I was really overwhelmed, and we kind of took longer than what we'd planned to give them [the students], more time to get stuff done. It was a work in progress, whereas in the institute, you got these ideas, but you're not putting them into place right away. With Katherine, we were [including new ideas] the next day. It worked well.

For Sheila to be successful in making changes to her classroom practice it appeared that planning and teaching side by side with the literacy specialist worked best. In a recent conversation, Katherine told me that Sheila has continued to include the *This I Believe* essays in her plans each spring, and that each year she has become more independent in her teaching and less dependent on help from her. With Katherine on the campus as a full time literacy specialist, Sheila experienced a sense of confidence in trying new ways to work with her students.

The Discourse of Deficit Thinking

Although Sheila did not comment aloud about her students' lack of ability, the discourse of deficit thinking wove its way through Sheila's story through her interactions with her students as well as the structures she created in the classroom. Her reliance on books on tape for whole class novels for her "regular class," but not for her Pre-AP class indicated a possible lack of confidence in students in the "regular class" as Sheila described her reasons for making this choice:

> We tend to do that to kind of make sure we cover our bases with our Special Ed or low level kids that could not read on their own or would not keep up on their own. I don't do it in Pre-AP of course. But I tend to do it in my regular classes.

From our conversation, Sheila implied that the other teachers used the tapes as well, and her use of "we" in the following response indicated that the team agreed:

> …at least they [the students] can hear it, and they can see it, and sometimes we would stop the tape and just read the aloud and take turns reading aloud. They like that too. But it's just so hard to try to keep everybody with you…we really try to help pull the lower, the slower ones with us.

Although Sheila's comment that "we really try to help pull the lower, the slower ones with us" echoed a sincere concern for the students' meaning making capabilities, it seemed equally important to "keep everybody with you." This need to manage the time and check off the items on the agenda so the class did not fall behind may have kept Sheila from pushing herself out of her comfort zone to include books that fit the readers in her classes. I asked her if she had considered forming different groups that read books with the same theme, but she said that she had not been successful when the team tried it a year ago. She commented:

> …that was a little overwhelming. It was hard to keep up who was doing what in what book, and I think the kids felt like, "Well, you know she's not going to know if I read it or not because there's so many books she's trying to keep up with."

It appeared that managing different texts for each group did not fit Sheila's need for sequence and order, an understandable response given the way she liked to read novels aloud. The apparent lack of trust in her students voiced above and the belief that they would try to do less if given the chance played a role in the way she enacted the new ideas from both of the institutes and her change process.

Sheila's classroom environment seemed single-voiced, under her control, and relied on worksheets and assignments rather than including the many voices of her students. As described earlier in the chapter, her classroom teaching resembled a transmission model by which Sheila managed most of the talk. That said, regardless of the instructional framework in her classroom, Sheila planned, had materials prepared each day, and maintained a zeal for her job. She never said, "I can't stand this or these kid(s)." During one of my visits, she mentioned that she was a perfectionist, and I responded, "Really? I would never have guessed that about you." She smiled a sheepish grin and looked down for a moment, glanced at her tape dispenser that was leaking the fine sand that weighed it down, and continued to smile.

The Discourse of High Stakes Testing.

Sheila spoke about the ways in which the reading test affected her curriculum and the stress it caused for her as well as the other teachers at school. Remembering a time when teaching wasn't stressful, Sheila quickly added, "Before TAKS and the TEKS and all that came in. It wasn't stressful at all." She reminisced about a time when teachers

taught their subject and didn't have to worry about the failure rate and extra testing. "You didn't have to make constant calls home, verify you've done this or…you've done that. Parents didn't question you. The kids were wrong. Not you. Now you can get questioned over anything."

Because the reading test was in eighth grade, the writing curriculum was not the focus. According to Sheila, as the year progressed and test day drew nearer, the writers' notebooks were replaced with reading activities. Phrases such as "the onslaught of TAKS," "We're about three weeks away from the real deal," "cover our tracks," were voiced throughout my time in Sheila's classroom. When we talked about developing a draft from a notebook entry, Sheila noted, "We probably need to do more and more…but we have been so focused, I guess on the TAKS rating up until a few weeks ago." With the test in late March, reading took precedence until late in the spring semester.

The stakes were high. Students would not be promoted to ninth grade if they did not pass the test, and the school and district received a scored from the state through an accountability rating system. The year of the study, 89.5% of the eighth graders passed the test the first time it was given. There were two more test dates before the start of school, so a percentage of passing students would most likely increase. Sheila was proud of the passing rate and attributed the students' success to more emphasis on reading and writing than in years past as well as her work with small group instruction. She added, "I think they were capable of doing it all along, but the stakes weren't high enough…we only had twenty kids fail the reading TAKS. We've never had just twenty kids fail a reading TAKS or anything." Rarely had I heard a teacher voice that the stakes were not

high enough, and as she continued to say, "So I think when the pressure was applied…," I thought about Sheila's approach to her teaching. Her "get the job done" attitude resulted in whatever needed to be done, was done. Although TAKS shifted the focus away from writing, Sheila did not seem visibly upset nor did she make comments that it frustrated her. Instead, she did her job and when she felt like she could give time to writing, she did.

For Sheila, the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing seemed to dictate the direction of her curriculum, and she did not challenge its authority.

Conclusion

Sheila was beginning to reshape the structures in her class. The addition of writing everyday in the writers' notebook, small group instruction, and working with the literacy specialist to engage the students in writing a "This I Believe" essay were vast changes for Sheila. It will take more than fourteen days of professional development over two summers for Sheila to make the kind of change that would begin to close the gap between her stated practice and her enacted practice. The change process for Sheila was far more complicated than learning new strategies in a summer professional development. Her ability to implement a writing workshop was dependent upon her ability to author herself as a teacher who could take the risk of less control. Moreover, our conversations indicated that working side-by-side with a literacy coach was necessary to build her confidence. This realization made it clear that as a Writing Project, it may be equally important for the teachers to have classroom support after attending summer professional development than it is to participate in the institute.

For thirty years, Sheila has been the manager of her classroom as she controlled the students' movement from one activity to another, and reluctantly transferred any responsibility to the students for their learning. Through my relationship with her, it became apparent that the internally persuasive discourse of her lived experiences as a student, daughter of an alcoholic father, and the sister of a twin, influenced the way she engaged dialogically with the curriculum from the institute. In addition, her longevity as a classroom teacher resulted in well-established practical knowledge making it more difficult for Sheila to let go of these established practices. Also, teaching in a testing context in which the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing controlled many of the events in her teaching life made it difficult as well. Sheila's need to keep her life organized in order to feel productive was the key to gaining an understanding of the interplay of discourses in her teaching life.

Chapter 5: Bree—A Story of Creating Rather than Changing

"But I'm also a pretty confident teacher…I know what I'm doing."
(Bree, May 2008)

This is a story about Bree, a novice teacher who had just completed her second year of teaching and was eager to begin her third. A self-described cynic who used words and phrases such as "battlefield" and "on the front lines" to describe the landscape of schools, Bree narrated her story as a confident teacher whose emerging practice was most influenced by her mentor. Fostered through this relationship, Bree's confidence sustained itself by following the authoritative framework provided for her teaching. Unlike Britney and Sheila, Bree's words and actions depicted her as a teacher with a strong sense of agency in the midst of managing the multiple discourses vying for her attention. This position afforded her the ability to speak openly about her teaching as she reflected on the years since attending the summer writing institutes.

Presenting herself as outspoken and secure in her beliefs about teaching, Bree often questioned and pushed against district and state curriculum mandates, as well as any text, written or spoken, that represented authority related to teaching English. Bree's strong sense of self developed from both her home and school experiences and the interplay between and among these internally persuasive discourses played a role in her evolving identity as a teacher. In contrast to Bree's belief in her own abilities, she expressed a deficit view of those students who were in her "regular" classes and discounted their experiences.

In addition, Bree, like Britney and Sheila, lived out her teaching in the context of the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing. Although she found this frustrating at times, Bree followed the expected course to prepare her students for the test, diminishing the authority and possible persuasiveness of the curriculum from the summer writing institute.

Prequel

Bree grew up in a small town in what is often referred to as "far" East Texas, seventeen miles from the Louisiana border. Unlike many of the small towns in the central part of the state, Bree's hometown has remained relatively untouched by economic development resulting in a small increase in population over the past ten years. According to Bree, "The two largest industries are timber and poultry. And running a close third would be, or now is, the oil industry." She mentioned that the town is divided geographically by ethnicity and economic status:

> …within the city limits you have the poor neighborhoods. One of those is Hispanic mostly. One of those is Black mostly. Just outside of town…the older suburban neighborhoods are predominately still white.

Bree described a landscape dotted with communities segregated by race and when asked if the different groups melded further away from town she said,

> No like separate, they're separate. Like if you go further out, there's communities that are predominately Black. You go to some other community, and it's predominately Hispanic. If you go to another community, it's predominately White. And it's not, it's not like we purposely, or our parents might purposely segregate, but at school we didn't, I mean I didn't care if there were Black students in my class.

Today, Bree lives near San Gabriel, in a city quite different from her childhood home. One distinction that her family had difficulty understanding was the idea that there was a Latino middle or upper class because according to Bree, "a middle or upper class Hispanic doesn't exist in East Texas." Admitting this may not be the case now, she believed it was still the way the community perceived the culture. According to Bree, the Latinos were, and continue to be, the laborers for the timber and poultry industries. She expanded on the economic status of the Latino population and said:

> They might be working towards it [middle class status], and I certainly hope for a lot of them they are, but it's not part of the demographics now. There's still very much a division of traditional Hispanic and traditional White.

Interestingly, the town remains today, as Bree knew it as a child growing up in the middle 1980s and 1990s.

Bree's parents divorced when she was thirteen; however, both have remarried and still live in Westfield. She has a half brother who is seven years older than she and other half siblings from her father's second marriage. Her mother, who was once the photographer for the local newspaper and eventually became the publisher, does not have a college degree. "She's brilliant. She's one of the people that really should [have a degree], but she got married, had a kid right after high school, and went to work," Bree said and then continued to tell me how education was not an expectation in her mother's family, but her mother certainly made it a priority for Bree.

While she spoke highly of her mother, it was Bree's father who seemed to be the biggest influence in her life. During San Gabriel ReWrites, her father was the topic for all of her generative writing and the eventual narrative in which she wrote a funny story

about the time he ate all his father's potato chips. Working in the oil industry as an independent land man, he traveled quite often when Bree was a young child. Like her mother, Bree's father expected her to attend college. "Education was a huge deal for me growing up. Both parents pushed it hardcore," she said. In an entry from her writers' notebook, she described her father as "…*so serious about work, and such a perfectionist to the point of driving his family nuts, [but] he is also fun and the perfect person to take road trips with."* His inclination toward perfection was evident throughout Bree's schooling. Beginning in junior high school, she lost what she termed, "her freedom" if all grades were not above a 90, first the phone, then weekends, then dance class. Although she offered to stay home from church on Wednesday evenings to do schoolwork, that was never an option.

Her Christian faith was an integral part of her upbringing. In both of her writer's notebooks, Christian references laced their way through the pages. In a notebook entry Bree wrote about the energy it took to complete the 3 X 3 activity that required the rapid generation of the three-word phrases on a single topic, she added, "*I thought I might not have enough inertia to the make next jump, but I kept on going like Jesus in an on-the-water foot race*." When asked to create a list of items she would include in a museum exhibit on her father, she wrote, "*Baptist hymnal and Bible.*" And in an entry from the previous summer, Bree wrote about her relationship with her father and said, "*We found our way with God's help*." Later, Bree told of her faithful attendance at weekly church services:

> Sunday morning and Wednesday night, and then Sunday afternoons usually. Later, starting in junior high, I was involved in Bible drill so that took up Sunday afternoon, and then as I got older, by sophomore in high school, I was involved in speaker's tournament. I think because that involved scholarships….

I noted Bree's involvement in Speakers' Tournament in Chapter Two in the following email correspondence:

> *Speakers Tournament is a contest held by the BGCT (Baptist General Convention of Texas). It is sort of a follow up competition to Bible Drill. The idea is that high school students put their knowledge of the Bible to practical use. I had to choose a topic from a list of twenty… I would usually start writing a speech in the late fall, and would have it revised, tweaked, edited, and memorized by early January… Scholarships from different universities…were awarded to the first, second and third place state winners. My senior year of high school, I really wanted to attend…a private school* [Baptist]*, and therefore REALLY expensive…*[The university] *offered a nice 4-year scholarship to the first place winner. To make a long story short, I went to state and won first place, enabling me to attend* [the Baptist university]*, which is where my degree is from.*

Bree did everything possible to ensure that she would receive scholarship money and admittance to this private university. Motivated by this desire, she said, "I took every upper level class under the sun," including four years of Honors English and Honors History. In addition she was a member of the Drill Team.

Like Britney and Sheila, school was easy for Bree. When asked about her high school experience in English, her eyes lit up. "I had an incredible high school English experience but that could be because I've always loved English," she exclaimed. Thinking back to her middle school experiences and moving forward through high school, Bree said, "You had, you know, grammar mechanics in eighth grade, and then you had ninth grade focused on literature, and then tenth grade was poetry and research papers, and then eleventh grade was American lit, and twelfth grade was British." She

elaborated about her freshmen and sophomore years saying:

> English has always come really easy to me so naturally…I don't have to work at it. My freshmen year, I've always been, we didn't call it pre-AP. Pre-AP started right at the end of my high school career. We called it Honors. I was always in Honors classes, always with the same group of friends, and we kind of planned it that way. I read *Animal Farm* my freshman year…I remember *Romeo and Juliet*. I remember those two, typical freshman English things and that was it. And then my sophomore year, I remember being the hardest of my four English years. I had a really hard teacher and I loved her. I still love her now, but she held your nose to the grindstone and she required so much. It was the first time I ever had to struggle, not with the assignment but with the load, the workload.

For reasons that Bree could not identify, her high school did not offer Advanced Placement (AP) classes, they offered an Honors track. Similar to Britney, Bree's Honors English group remained the same throughout high school and according to Bree, "was 95% white, with two or three black kids and just one Latina." Based on her recollection of her English classes, it appeared as if Bree had what some might consider a traditional English experience. She remembered reading many novels and plays such as *The Scarlet Letter, Raisin in the Sun, Glass Menagerie,* and *The Great Gatsby* and studying vocabulary. With the exception of writing a research paper, there was little time spent on writing unless it was in response to the literature or for the state mandated test required for graduation. Bree described this experience saying:

> When I was in high school, we had the big research paper in tenth grade and then you might have some mini research papers along the way. But mostly it was, you'd read *Macbeth,* and then you'd have some type of response to *Macbeth*, discuss the over ambitious nature of Macbeth or discuss the relationship of Macbeth and his wife, or you always went back to the reading to answer the question.

Bree smiled as she remembered her senior English teacher who was also her theater teacher, married to her Spanish teacher, and was also the music director for her youth group at church. Laughing, she said,

> So in a week's time, I'd see him every single day, twice a day, and on Wednesdays three times a day, but I loved him. He was a great teacher, and he was from [our town], so he had like this hometown connection.

She graduated from high school in 2001, secured her scholarship money through Speaker's Tournament, and started her university coursework the following fall semester. Based on a recommendation from a former youth pastor, she attended a small Baptist university in the central part of the state, which was located approximately four hours away from her hometown. Graduating in 2005 with a degree in English and a secondary teaching certificate, Bree was hired by the San Gabriel Independent School District as a high school English teacher and taught Pre-AP sophomores and "regular" seniors [Bree's descriptors] her first year. As a novice teacher, she was assigned a mentor, Sandra, who was a veteran teacher of thirty years, the department chairperson, and who taught AP English IV. Over the course of my time with Bree, it became evident that Sandra's influence played a significant role in Bree's emerging identity as a teacher. At the time of the study, she had just completed her second year of teaching, and in an undated journal entry, Bree wrote the following letter to her former teachers:

> *I have been a part of your profession for two years now. While I would by no means consider myself a "veteran" teacher, I have at least had time to let the water of my first year baptism evaporate from by brain & my soul. Perhaps it is only now, as I begin (embark upon?) my third year, that I truly understand & appreciate what it means o be a good teacher. Therefore, perhaps it is only now that I begin to understand how exceptional my teachers were (and are, I'm sure).*

It was stories such as these and the story that follows that shaped not only the ways in which Bree identified herself as a teacher but also her response to the curriculum from the summer writing institute and the possibility for change in her classroom practice.

Bree's Story

My previous work in San Gabriel ISD focused on the middle school language arts teachers at San Gabriel Middle School, so I looked forward to meeting with Bree at San Gabriel High School. It was late October, two months after the completion of the summer writing institute, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007,* and I was excited to hear what Bree had to say about her experiences. The high school, located approximately five minutes from the middle school, sat on the main state highway that ran through the middle of town. At the time of my study, the school days operated on a block schedule which meant that Monday and Wednesday were "A" days, Tuesday and Thursday were "B" days, and rather than the ninety-minute classes on block days, the Friday schedule consisted of eight forty-five minute classes, so the students attended all of their classes on that day.

I arrived as classes were changing for third period, entered through the front doors, picked up my visitor's badge, and headed down the long hallway to Bree's room. Weaving my way through the crowd of students, I turned the last corner and found Bree tidying up the remnants from her last class, English II. She greeted me with a welcoming smile and said, "Hi, oh, I like your bag." I acknowledged her compliment and while setting up the recorder at a table near the door, I told Bree that we would visit about her participation in both of the summer writing institutes, *San Gabriel Writes 2006* and *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, and her reasons for attending these professional development

events; her pre-service education; and the challenges she faces as a writing teacher. Similar to my conversations with Britney and Sheila, I was also curious to hear about any strategies she had included in her practice since attending the institute(s).

As if we had known each other for many years, Bree spoke with ease about her teacher education program. "Most of my preparation for teaching of writing actually came from my English college classes," she began. Bree described the program in the College of Education as one that offered good classes on classroom management and ways to be a high school teacher in general. She said, "If you're a secondary teacher, they expect you to learn what you need to learn as far as teaching English in your English classes. What you need to learn to be a teacher, you learn in your education classes."

Bree spoke about her experiences with a memorable professor who taught both rhetoric and composition. She connected reading *Bird by Bird* by Ann Lamott in his class to the readings for *San Gabriel Writes 2006*, and said, "I took an upper level composition class, and it was there that I really started making connections between my writing and the writing that I wanted my students to do." Although Bree expressed this understanding, I would soon learn that this had not been enacted in her practice. From her description, it sounded as if the professor's beliefs aligned with the philosophy of the Writing Project:

> And he really focused on just getting your story down and getting it on paper and then going back later and doing editing and revising. We read you know *Bird by Bird*, in one chapter that "shitty first draft," and that one has always stuck with me, and I still read that one to my kids. And he was really more about the story where previously a lot of my English teachers had been about the mechanics and that kind of changed my view of what you know. I thought 'Man, if I had just been taught that in high school,' and I was really good with English and writing in

> high school. I loved to write when I was in high school, but if I had just been told, 'Just get your story down. You have a story to tell and it's important. I want to hear what you have to say,' how much better could I have been, and how much better could my parents have been. So this was the first time I had ever heard that concept. He was the first one that really taught the idea of just tell your story.

However, this "aha" moment and the accompanying joy regarding the teaching of writing had yet to influence her practice. From what I learned in the institute about her mother's insistence on using "correct" grammar, and from what Bree told me, it appeared as if her college classes in grammar made a greater impact on her as a writing teacher as well. Remembering her Advanced Grammar class and the professor who drew an analogy between the words in a sentence to puzzle pieces, Bree said, "I have always thought of grammar as kind of a puzzle, kind of filling in the pieces," and believed that if this approach worked for her, it would work for her students. Admittedly, she added, "I have always loved literature a little bit more than writing. That's kind of my passion." Her comment was one that I often heard from secondary English teachers and seemed to highlight the need for the work of the Writing Project.

Spending time in both high school and middle school for her student teaching, Bree's experiences reflected her personal interests, literature and grammar. In the high school, the freshmen read the *Odyssey* while the juniors read *Death of Salesman* with all of the writing focused on the literature. Unsure if the teachers taught a separate writing unit, Bree saw little evidence of writing other than the responses to the literature. Halfway through the semester, Bree moved to the middle school and said,

> …it was really strange. They actually had separate reading and writing classes…but at the eighth grade level, they were really focusing on grammar, on knowing parts of speech, and being able to look at verbs and all the different

> forms of the verb, so it was grammar heavy…lots of worksheets, lots of fill in the blank.

Although Bree thought the separation of classes was strange, the emphasis on grammar was no surprise. She referenced an interesting strategy in which the teacher generated a list of grammar mechanics that the students needed to find in the class novel. "I thought that was very good because then they saw those mechanics being used in writing. That was the first time I'd ever seen someone integrate the two together," she commented. Although this idea intrigued Bree, I did not see her use it with her students during my observations nor did she mention it during other conversations.

Upon completion of her degree, Bree was hired as a high school English teacher at San Gabriel High School. Her first assignment included two preparations, Pre-AP sophomores and "regular" senior English (her descriptors), and stated that, "my seniors did a lot of literary response." In addition, she included some hands-on activities that she acknowledged came from the Internet as well as another teacher who taught seniors because, as Bree noted, "I didn't know that ancillaries [additional resources that provide activities to complement the literature textbook] existed." Bree also relied on her own experiences in high school and said, "Some of it I just made up from what I remembered in high school." As a first year teacher, it appeared as if her personal school biography played a more significant role in the choices she made rather than her teacher preparation program (Lortie, 1975). Regarding her Pre-AP classes, she offered, "A lot of my ideas came from Sandra…my mentor teacher. She basically just handed me all of her materials, and so I basically did what she had done with a few modifications here and there." In the

months that followed, it became evident that Bree's relationship with Sandra continued in a similar manner. Both attended AP workshops together, and Bree carried out the plans Sandra created.

Throughout Bree's first year of teaching, she relied on her personal experiences, other teachers, and the Internet to help her negotiate this new landscape. Not lacking in confidence, she openly took suggestions that she believed would make her a better teacher, so it was not surprising that she signed up to attend to *San Gabriel Writes 2006* the summer following her first year in the classroom.

When I asked her, "What prompted you to come?"

She replied:

> Well I've always loved to write myself, and so I hadn't gotten to write all year. I just got out of college, and I spent a whole year teaching other people how to write. Yeah, I get to go do writing myself. That was part of it, but also because I've always had the belief as a teacher that you can continue to learn things. I don't care if you're a first year or a twentieth year, there is something that you can learn and sometimes that's overwhelming because you have all these great ideas. You're like "Oh man, the system just changed you know. What are we going to do with all these great ideas?" But that was really what prompted me to take the writing conference. It was something new that I get to learn. Something that I can maybe apply or at least you know go away with some new ideas. If I don't get to apply them now, you know, tuck them in cubbyhole and maybe apply them later.

I found it interesting that Bree used the phrase, "maybe apply" when offering her reasons for attending. Although she came to the institute for the purpose of learning based on her belief that "there is always something you can learn," she seemed to approach the opportunity with a bit of professional judgment. Later in the year, she voiced her apparent skepticism when it came to professional development and its usefulness with the exception of her AP summer workshops. However, she did acknowledge that she found

value in activities such as creating a Positive/Negative Graph (Rief, 1992) and emptying purses, pockets, and wallets to help her students find a topic. Reflectively, she stated,

> Personally, it's never been that much of a challenge for me to write a rough draft, and so I often forget that it is for some of my students. They look at that blank piece of paper, and it terrifies them…

Writing came easily for Bree, so her first experience teaching writing presented challenges for which she felt unprepared. According to Bree, she drew from what she learned in the writing institute and included the graphs in her curriculum during her second year in the classroom; however, I saw little evidence in her teaching to support her claim.

In addition to the topic generation ideas, she also enjoyed learning about the other participants through their writing and said, "These people that I've known for a year that I didn't know had gone through X,Y, and Z, or I didn't know that person was so funny…so I really enjoyed the camaraderie of it. Bree's reaction was common to many of the participants in the institutes.

Following *San Gabriel Writes 2006*, Bree attended her first AP conference with Sandra, and when school began in the fall, she felt an overwhelming responsibility to prepare her students for this test. Bree voiced her inadequacies as an AP teacher and said, "It [AP workshop] almost made me feel more fearful than comfortable with what I was teaching. I guess because when I was in high school, we didn't have AP." This was Bree's second reference to her high school experience, but in this case, it was her lack of experience that seemed to influence her perspective on this particular group of students. Referring to her AP students as "APers," she spoke at length about their needs and how

she believed they had to change their way of thinking and asked rhetorically, "How do I do that? Well obviously they've been taught the same way for however many years now, and I need something new and refreshing," so she used the chapter from *Bird by Bird* (Lamott, 1995) and the life graph from the institute with this group of students, but not the "regular" students.

As I learned more about Bree's beliefs and practices, it appeared that she thought differently about the two groups: one group able and interested, while the other uninterested in participating in these activities. Referring to her seniors, she stated, "They didn't care to know it. They don't have to pass the TAKS test, so I'm not really under any scrutiny there, and so we just had fun." Her assumptions regarding the "regular" students limited her desire to include the new ideas from the institute in her practice.

At the end of her second year, Bree's teaching assignment changed and included two new preparations, tenth grade "regular" English and eleventh grade Pre AP English. Thus her reason for attending the four-day follow-up, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*:

> I had so much fun the first go-around, and had so many ideas that surely I couldn't remember them all. And I thought "Man, if we did this follow-up, what more fun could I have and what good things can I maybe learn or maybe old things that I had forgotten about…."And the fact that I was given two new preps this year…So I was, "Oh man, what am I going to do with these kids?" And so I really went to the institute hoping to find something to anchor myself for these two preps.

Fearing that the institutes would be exactly the same, she was glad that it was a different experience and commented, "I really liked how we had a more elementary person there and a more secondary person there," citing that she felt more supported than in the previous summer institute. Bree also liked the book, *Notebook Know-How* (Buckner,

2005), and highlighted the fact that she was using the writers' notebook with her "regular" tenth grade class. Stating that the students used the notebooks as suggested in the institute, strategies in the back, writing in the front, Bree admitted she had spent most of the time teaching strategies rather than generating text. Mindful of the TAKS test in February, she believed that her students would experience more success if they thought of topics and jotted down ideas rather than spend the time writing narratives. However, during my time in her classroom, I observed the students using their notebooks primarily for completing the daily warm-up and not as Bree described. She added that this year, her "regulars" created the positive/negative graph while her "Pre-APers" did the "Genre Switch."[4] She particularly liked the last day of the institute when Michelle met with the secondary teachers to talk about the ways in which she used the writers' notebook with her students in addition to the way she organized her year under the umbrella of one theme. Bree was in the midst of trying the thematic approach with her Pre-AP students, but not her "regulars," and said, "Our theme this year…is what does it mean to be a global citizen?" Although she said she was unsure of how well it was going, she maintained a committed stance to seeing it through. From our conversation, it seemed as if Bree had incorporated a few ideas from the institute, however, similar to Sheila, her stated practice differed from her enacted practice.

Bree and Sheila shared another experience; both benefited from their relationship with the language arts specialist on their campuses. Jule, the high school specialist played

[4] "Genre Switch" is an activity from the institute that required the students to write in various genres on the same topic.

a significant role in Bree's teaching her first two years, and she spoke highly of her capabilities:

> She was in every sense of the word, a facilitator. Any time, I mean it didn't matter if it was writing or reading or I'm having a bad day, any time I needed anything, she found it, like that! I mean instantaneously found it…and would come to my class and show me how to do it and show the kids to do it, and so she just made me feel really comfortable.

Thinking back over her first two years as a high school teacher, Bree felt supported by Jule and reminisced about the writing her students did under Jule's tutelage. As the year progressed, and I spent more time in Bree's classroom, it was evident that Jule's presence and influence was missed. She moved to the middle school to take over as librarian, and a new specialist, who, according to Bree, "had some pretty big shoes to fill," took her place at the high school.

Toward the end of our conversation, Bree commented that having enough time was the biggest challenge she faced as a teacher of writing, but when she spoke it appeared that many other factors challenged her as well. Bree posed a list of rhetorical questions that shed light on many of the issues that dominated her thinking:

> Have I met the TEKS? Are they doing what they need for next year? Are they writing well…? There's so much that goes into teaching writing, and so many different ways that you can teach writing, and so many different styles of writing that they need to know that sometimes it's a little overwhelming. Which one do I want to focus on? Which one am I going to teach? And the biggest issue is time.

Bree presented herself to her students and to me as a confident teacher, but like most new teachers, she grappled with these questions and the impact on her instruction. Many of the answers came initially from Jule, followed by Sandra and the discourse of the

Advanced Placement curriculum, which seemingly, garnered more authority than that of the summer writing institutes.

Intrigued by Bree's story, I looked forward to the time I would spend in her classroom. We spent the next few moments setting up a schedule for observations that would begin in December. Excited about working with Bree and the two middle school teachers, Britney and Sheila, I left San Gabriel and returned one month later.

Bree's Classroom

It was early December when I walked into Bree's classroom just after the start of third period. I chose to observe her "regular" English II class and was happy to see some of the students from the middle school with whom I had worked when they were in eighth grade. They recognized me as well and smiled, and then continued eating their Glow Worms and Cheetos while Bree gave instructions for class.

Seated at tables rather than individual desks, the students sat in pairs facing Bree at the front of the room. Thirteen boys and twelve girls shared the space that was decorated like most of the English classrooms on campus. Bree's teaching area consisted of a lectern and a media cart for the projector and whiteboard supplies. The whiteboard behind this space included the daily objectives, the Weekly Writing for tenth grade Pre-AP, and reminders listed by class highlighting due dates and materials required for class. Flanking the whiteboard that ran the length of the adjacent wall were class rules and commercially produced motivational quotes. The wall at the back of the room was painted green, school color green, and was filled with posters that included a likeness of

the Queen Elizabeth, an architectural drawing of a castle, images of shields representing royalty, and other images and sayings related to British literature.

Bree's desk sat in front of this wall in the far left corner of the room. Neatly organized with the typical office supplies: stapler, tape dispenser, pencil caddy, paper tray, and a box of Kleenex lined up in a row, Bree used this space for record keeping and rarely sat here during instructional time. Her computer rested on a small table that created an "L" shaped workspace. A whiteboard calendar hung on the wall behind her desk with the bell schedule, school calendar, and various notes, pictures and cards tacked up around it, creating a space that included all of the necessary information related to her work as the manager of a classroom. A table that held plastic trays labeled for each class period and a file cabinet and storage cabinet sat along this wall as well.

Short bookcases lined the wall adjacent to her desk that held dictionaries, anthologies, and some professional resources. In contrast to Britney and Sheila's classrooms, Bree did not have a classroom library. Given the department's extensive use of the anthology as well as class novels, it was not surprising that independent reading was not a focus. In close proximity, two more bookcases held the class sets of *A Separate Peace*, *Night*, and other texts for whole class reading. Sitting on top, personal items that included Bree's name carved from wood, pictures of her boyfriend's children, and a framed Bible verse from Proverbs 3:5-6 that read, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths," were carefully positioned. Displayed with aesthetic purpose, her

rubber ducky collection was placed in front of a leopard fabric-wrapped board that held newspaper clippings, more family photos, cards, and other memorabilia.

Looking around the room at the interactions between and among the students, I was struck by the difference between the middle school and high school settings. Eating chips and candy, drinking water and sodas, sharing earbuds from i-Pods between friends, writing and passing notes, texting, reading the parent packet for drivers' education, talking to one another, and putting on makeup were many of activities that I observed while Bree was teaching on this day. But the most interesting aspect of my observation was that Bree continued without redirecting their behavior and seemed unaffected by the disengagement. Over the next six months, I became more familiar with Bree's beliefs about teaching and the students she taught, both AP and "regular."

Bree's Teaching

As I mentioned earlier, the high school operated on a Block schedule; however, this was the first year they implemented this configuration of classes. Rather than the typical "A" day/"B" day that alternates through the year, San Gabriel High School chose to have each day remain consistent, so on Mondays and Wednesdays the students attended periods one, three, five, and seven for ninety minutes; and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the students attended periods two, four, six, eight for ninety minutes; and on Fridays, they attended all eight classes for forty-five minutes each. Taking a direct teach approach, Bree led each class I observed for the entire period with the exception of the days they used the library for research.

This third period class met on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and each time I came class started with a warm-up. They used their writers' notebook for these entries, most often related to the reading. Today's warm-up asked the students to "List 2 different characters from *Night* (Wiesel, 1960). For each character list what makes him/her unique, and how he/she is similar to the other character." Two days later, they were directed to write about, "Which character are you going to write about in your bio-poem? Why did you choose this character?" And in the spring during the research unit, Bree asked the students to answer the question, "If you found a great quote in a book for your research paper, what information would you need from the book to create a works cited entry?" From what I observed, only a few of the students actually wrote, and on the days when Bree took a grade, she sat at her desk and called their names in rapid succession to come back and show her their work. Scrambling to write something down, most of the students had one sentence, possibly two written, and that was enough for the daily grade. I never observed the class sharing their responses. The inclusion of the activity seemed to be a placeholder to give Bree time to take attendance and touch base with students who had not turned in assignments.

Although she posted the daily objectives on the board, I was unable to discern which activities would take place on any given day. Listed according to levels, the board read like this:

Daily Objectives:

II Pre-AP

What happens in Act 1? How does that impact the play?

II ELA
How do we write bio-poems?

III AP
Do you agree w/the essay on "Men in Love?" Why or Why not?

Weekly Writing (10th Pre-AP)
600 words due Mon/Tues
Write about an issue that is important to you. You may use "I" but keep "you" out. Make sure it is a piece of rhetoric.

Reminders

10th Pre-AP:	Weekly Writing 600 words due Mon/Tues
10th Reg:	Keep up with your *Night* notes Bio-poems due Friday, Dec. 14th
11th AP:	Bring your white textbook 6 weeks novel test—Dec. 18th

This format remained consistent throughout my time in Bree's classroom. When I arrived on this day and saw they were writing Bio-poems, I thought, "She's using an idea from the first institute," and soon discovered that Bree turned the focus from the students to a character in *Night*. Before they wrote, they answered questions on a study guide, and then took turns reading the next chapter. In a loud, upbeat, almost shouting voice, Bree read the question, a student answered, Bree revoiced the short answer adding information and then said the answer word by word as the students wrote verbatim on their papers. When a student questioned an answer, Bree looked it up in the book while the class sat waiting for her response. This interaction pattern repeated itself each time Bree led the class.

Upon completion of the questions, Bree directed the students to open their books and proceeded to call on individuals to read aloud portions of the text. During this round

robin reading time, Calley and Monica were working on something else. Hayden was not reading along, nor was P; she was reading a note from a friend. Andrew was messing with his backpack. The boy next to Andrew had a plastic vile filled with liquid hanging from his left ear. He removed it and restrung it through the hole. Two students slept while one used an orange fluorescent highlighter to draw a Star of David on his study guide. The two students next to him had their heads down, Calley picked up her book to shield the crackers she was eating, and Andrew began to play with his large safety pin key chain. All of this occurred while Bree continued to call on students one at a time, often waking them from sleep to participate. Later in the year, we talked about this class of sophomores and Bree said:

> I was just overwhelmed and every single one of them needed me individually. Sometimes I look at this sophomore class and think that I haven't done enough with them…I think it's totally different from any type of teaching I've ever done before as far as discipline control. I'm not used to having to repeat myself over and over and over again, and I think that just the logistics of running a class has gotten in the way of doing more with their education.

The two years previous to this one, Bree taught Pre-AP and "regular" seniors, so this was her first experience with sophomores. After hearing her comment, I thought about the ways in which Bree managed the teaching and learning moments in her classroom. She apparently had little experience managing a class that included students with a range of ability and varying degrees of motivation. Bree said, "This sophomore class has a reputation of being just as a whole, a lower performing class, comparatively…there are some highly intelligent students in this class. Some individual intelligence is there but as a group, they are a low performing class." Bree, daunted by the task of managing this

class, relied on the class's reputation as a reason for their poor behavior and achievement, in effect accepting the students' inattention as a given.

Toward the end of class, the students created a bio poem for a character of their choosing from *Night*, and one about themselves. One of the student's writing stood out to me and illustrated the depth of thought and feeling this student had. When writing about Elie, he used phrases such as "studious, faithful, intelligent" and "who feels betrayed by God, [and] haters," and when writing about himself, he wrote, "dark, quiet, imaginative," and "who feels distant, anger, pain." I hoped his writing would inspire Bree to include more of these types of activities in her practice, but as the year progressed, I observed one other opportunity like the bio-poem for Bree's "regular" students to express their understanding of themselves or the world around them, and this was an "I Am" poem associated with the research unit. When I returned in January, Bree began the unit and the classroom discourse pattern remained consistent.

Drawing from *Hip-Hop Poetry and the Classics* (Sitomer & Cirelli, 2004), a book of poems and worksheets, Bree created a plan that combined the study of poetic devices while comparing hip-hop artists to classic poets such as "Aint I a Woman" by Sojourner Truth to "For Woman" by Talib Kweli. Concurrently, the students engaged in an inquiry of one these artists. Bree explained, "And research papers are something we have to do by TEKS so this is a required paper that I have to get done by this time of year." The first day of the unit, Bree gave the students a six-page packet that included an explanation of the project, instructions for parenthetical citations, "note" pages for bibliographic information that included quotes and/or paraphrased material, and the rubric. Bree then

directed the students to look at the page on citations. Standing in the front of the room and reading word for word from the page, she began, "Parenthetical documentation will be the method you use to document within your paper the source used for a direct *or* [emphasized] paraphrased quote…" Some of the students followed along, while most were disengaged. Bree continued reading both pages, placing emphasis on words deemed important by her and ended with "Any questions?" There were none—though I was uncertain if the students understood the information.

After the citation lesson, Bree exclaimed, "Now we are going to draw for your topic!" Walking around the room with a cup that held the names of both hip-hop and classic poets, Bree seemed pleased until one boy refused to pick a name. After some coaxing and a warning that she would pick for him, he still refused. Bree drew Walt Whitman's name, handed it to the student, and said, "You have Walt Whitman." He was not happy, and he remained unhappy throughout the unit, doing as little as possible on the project. The remaining students chose Hip-Hop names such as Eminem, 2 Pac, Run DMC, and Public Enemy while others chose from among the classic poets that included Poe, Shakespeare, Keats, Tennyson, Blake, and Shelly.

Within moments, the class left for the library and Calley approached Bree and asked, "Can I change mine to Foss?"

"No, he's not on the list," Bree answered.

Bree maintained a strict adherence to the list, and Calley accepted her answer then walked to the library with her friends. Once the students entered the library, there was confusion related to finding sources and discontent with some of the poets they had

drawn from the cup. Bree worked with individual students helping them find information but held her position on assigning the poets.

On the following visit, during a lesson from *Hip-Hop Poetry and the Classics*, I observed Bree read the poem aloud and then, responding to her questions, the students filled in the worksheets.

Bree asked, "…rage against death. What does that mean."

Anthony replied, "Get mad at death."

"Exactly. Chris, number five, the last one. What are the unspoken?" Bree asked.

Brittany answered, "That you deserve it."

"Yes," Bree confirmed Brittany's response.

This pattern continued with the occasional request, "Is that the answer? Can you say that again?" from students who were busy filling in the blanks on the worksheet. Throughout the remaining time in her classroom, she was positioned at the front of the room leading the class through each item. There was rarely more than a three-word response from the students as Bree engaged the group in an IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) pattern of discourse.

The class worked on this project for approximately four weeks, and when I returned, Bree was calling for research papers. Fourteen of the twenty-four students had not turned them in and were failing the class because of it. On most days that I spent with Bree, she had brief conversations with individuals as well as the whole group regarding the danger of failing due to incomplete work. Regarding the completion of work, I have no recollection of Bree reflecting on the possible reasons for this behavior. She did not

get frustrated or yell, she graciously accepted what they had or did not have and occasionally made comments such as, "That's what I figured," when some students did not have their work. It was obvious that she liked the students, but she did not appear to hold them accountable. One day she made the following comments to a student regarding the daily warm-ups:

> It helps if you actually do them on the day that it's due…You won't be scrambling to write them from someone else's paper…Do them when you're supposed to be doing them and you won't have that problem.

Said with empathy, she acknowledged the students' lack of participation and not handing in papers on time, creating a tacit acceptance of the behavior.

Bree and the Discourse of Deficit Thinking

Each day in Bree's class resembled the teaching and learning interactions described in the research unit, and these interactions seemed at least partially influenced by Bree's beliefs about her students' interests and capabilities. Beginning with her participation in the institute, Bree made comments that expressed a deficit view of her students. In a small group conversation referenced in Chapter 2, Bree offered this analysis of the students who live in San Gabriel:

> But you know we were talking about how a lot of our kids here, it's so sad because San Gabriel is all they know and for a lot of them San Gabriel is all they're ever going to know. You know, they get out, and they go work for an uncle or they go work, you know, for whomever and not that that's a bad thing for a lot of them, but on the other hand, you kind of have this feeling of why am I trying to teach you this, you know. It's not really going to matter for you.

Bree's assumption regarding the students' experiences, goals, and aspirations seemed to be linked to the expectations she set in her classroom and helped explain her acceptance

of the students' attitude toward school and in particular her English class. I saw the outcome of this belief as I observed her classroom and spoke with Bree about the research assignment. She said:

> If it were up to me, quite honestly, I wouldn't have that class do a research paper at least not to that level. I might have them do more of a research project. I wouldn't have them actually write a MLA citation paper because the majority of those kids are never going to need to use a MLA citation paper. They might need to know how to do some research, how to use the library to their benefit and especially how to use the Internet to their benefit but it doesn't benefit them in the long run, in the real world.

When I asked her, "So why do you think that?" She replied:

> Because of the goals that these kids have. With my pre-AP class, those kids who are definitely destined for college, it's something that they need to know how to do. But with my regular class, if you were to ask the majority of them, there's maybe a handful that want to go to a major university. There are many who want to get an associate degree like a technical school or want to go into like a health career like nursing or something like that and MLA research is not going to help them in technical college. It's just not. Researching, yes but writing a MLA style paper is not.

As she continued to speak about the research unit, she reiterated, "My 'regular' kids are going to struggle with it, but it's not going to be really beneficial in the long run." Unhappy that she was required to have the students engage in the research process and write a paper, Bree offered a revision to the assignment that lessened the rigor of the work, a research project such as creating a historical figure cereal. These perspectives indicated that Bree had lower expectations for the "regular" class and admitted that she assigned the unit because in her words, "…it's one of the things that we have to do, so we just get it out of the way."

Bree's deficit views were highlighted through her continual comparison between her Pre-AP and AP students and those students enrolled in her "regular" classes. Privileging one over the other, she made statements such as, "My Pre-APer's get to do that" in reference to taking a piece of writing through the process or "With my regulars…." She focused primarily on her AP students often expressing the joy she felt teaching them. During one of our conversations, she commented:

> I really love the writing in my Pre-AP classes more than any other class because I get to teach them…style, formula writing, rhetorical writing, be persuasive, but I also get to let them be a little freer, and you know, write about yourself…list your ten best and worst memories and pick one and write about it.

The implication that Bree did not enjoy teaching writing in her "regular" classes was evident and the following statement reinforced her view that it was the students who were the problem, "It's different between my regulars and my pre-APers. I don't have to remind them. They understand that one thing leads to the next. My regular kids just sort of have like one-day-at-a-time memory." Frustrated with the notion that her "regular" students don't make the connection between Wednesday's lesson and Friday's lesson, Bree did not entertain the thought that maybe the structure of the teaching and learning moments in her classroom coupled with her low expectations might be a factor in this phenomena.

Another example referenced the district adopted curriculum, she said, "It's too advanced [although it is based on the state curriculum standards] for my regular kids. It wants them to think at a higher lever, but it's asking them for prior knowledge that kids in San Gabriel don't have." Bree had expressed this same belief during the institute

regarding that the students lack of experiences in San Gabriel. She added, "C-Scope [the adopted curriculum] may work great for another school district but here in San Gabriel their life experiences are pretty much San Gabriel focused. I would say that the majority of them have never been outside of San Gabriel." Her belief that many of the students had not traveled outside of San Gabriel was a deeply held assumption she articulated on several occasions.

In addition, Bree expressed frustration with the "regular" students' lacking responsibility and being unprepared for class. She said the biggest obstacle to teaching writing "is getting them [the 'regular' students] to bring something to write on or remembering to bring it the next day, which is the biggest problem I've had with the writer's notebook." According to Bree, she often provided paper and pencil and thought, "Here's a piece of paper. A piece of paper I know you're going to lose… that's a lot of the problem is just keeping up with the work." Bree added that she was happy teaching in San Gabriel, but if the principal took way her Pre-AP and AP classes, she would miss the challenge. Referring to her "regular" students she said, "They're not necessarily wanting to be in English, and I understand that."

While preparing for the TAKS test, Bree had the students practice writing introductions and after reading them she commented:

> They're good. They're very good and I'm very proud of them. I didn't expect that. To be quite honest, I'm really surprised. And even with that boy, I may have been underestimating him this year. Or I may have been underestimating the majority because of the few minorities in the class that were issues. I knew Kathryn should have been in my pre-AP English class. I knew that there was so much more she could do and so much more she could

> learn. And Marissa is the same way but I can't cater to that because I have to cater to the lower ones and that's unfortunate.

Bree's realization that many of her students' could write well coupled with her reflective comment, "I may have been underestimating the majority because of a few…", provided a starting point for future conversations in her development as a writing teacher. Maintaining her views that if the student writes well, they need to be in AP, and that she needed to "cater to the lower ones," she still expressed her pride in the students' work. From the lessons that followed on writing the body and the conclusion of the paper, it was apparent this initial success had a positive impact on her teaching. For Bree, the change process may actually begin with her changing perceptions of her students.

Bree and the Discourse of High Stakes Testing.

On several occasions, Bree expressed her displeasure with any standardized testing. Once during the institute, she said, "I don't believe in standardized testing" and later in her classroom, she said, "Part of the problem that TAKS causes because it's so, you know: Make sure you do this, this, this, and this, all standardized. I teach it that way." She elaborated on her feelings one day after class commenting:

> They get this one-day out of the year bang, it's done with tests. It's like we take this whole year of learning and growing and reading and writing and then bang, all in one test. And there's so many factors that go into that one day you know, and if you're having a bad day, if you're sick, maybe you have test anxiety, you know I never liked that, but I don't like the rules. They don't ask me.

In early February, Bree prepared the students for TAKS, the state-mandated test that included reading passages, answering questions, writing short answer responses to the reading, writing an essay, and revising and editing passages. She used a packet that Jule,

the literacy specialist, had created for writing the essay, and took the students through the exercises step by step, employing the same teaching strategies she used in prior lessons, reading from the worksheets while the students completed the tasks. Although this test had high stakes attached to it at various grade levels, the Tenth Grade Exit Level Test was a practice year for the eleventh grade requirement for graduation. The scores counted in the school and district accountability rating, but the students did not endure consequences if they did not perform well. Somewhat relieved, Bree said, "I like the sophomore level. There's not the junior level pressure of or even the senior level pressure of we've got to get the graduated or they have to pass the test."

That said, Bree still described the preparation for the test as a struggle and worried if her students could write well enough to pass the test. In a concerned voice, Bree said, "I struggle with the fact that I have so many days to get them prepared for this test at the end of the year, which is a big deal for my regular kids." She was also conflicted by the notion of "teaching to the test" and the stigma associated with that practice, and even though Bree did not believe she did that, she said, "…it's constantly in the back of my head." In addition, she expressed concern about her ability to improve their writing saying, "I don't know that I do the best job…I'm so worried about, 'Can you just write enough to reach this score? Can you just write well enough that I know that you can pass this test, this test and move on," When I first visited with Bree about this topic, she didn't seem too conflicted or influenced by the discourse of high stakes testing, but as time passed it became evident that she did indeed yield to the pressures of its authority and did the expected test preparation.

Bree and the Discourse of the College Board and Her Mentor.

Not only did Bree have to think about the state mandated test, she also had the pressure of preparing several of her classes for the Advanced Placement exam. As I mentioned before, Bree enjoyed teaching her Pre-AP and AP classes most and felt an overwhelming responsibility to ensure they were successful. When Bree came to San Gabriel, she was paired with a mentor, Sandra, who taught Junior and Senior AP classes, sponsored the Academic Decathlon, and was the head of the English department. Thrilled with the prospect of teaching Pre-AP students, Bree developed a close relationship with Sandra and used most her ideas. Bree said, "She just taught pre-AP the year before and basically just handed me all of her materials, and so I basically did what she had done with a few modifications here and there." This practice was not atypical of beginning teachers, and Bree spent several days over the course of her time at the high school observing in Sandra's classroom.

The summer after Bree's first year of teaching, both she and Sandra attended *San Gabriel Writes 2006*, and a few weeks afterward, they attended the AP conferences at the university. While riding together, Bree visited with Sandra about her feelings of inadequacies and said, "What am I going to do? How do I train them?" and later she voiced her insecurity and vulnerability saying, "And I really hope *you* [the students] don't know that *I* don't know what I'm teaching you that you're supposed to know to pass the test because I don't but here you go you know." From this point forward, Sandra and she worked closely together and created a plan to prepare the Pre-AP sophomores for AP junior year. She said,

> …it was through those conversations that I came up with the idea of the weekly writing. And I had gotten some material at that AP conference that I've pulled most of my weekly writings from so the rhetorical writing, and the persuasive writing, and knowing how to write a paper without saying I or you, came from the AP conference.

In one word, Bree described AP writing—"structured" and said that each paragraph adhered to a specific form and included a detail, two quotations, and two sentences of analysis. She said, "Our hands are kind of tied as far as you can't let them just write all over the page like you would normally would want to because they won't ever pass the exam if you let them do that." According to Bree, teaching AP was difficult, and she compared it to a college level class. She said, "I really just piggy-backed off of [Sandra]. There were days when I had taught things to my AP students that I'm not real sure I knew before I taught it to them." Based on Bree's recollection of her early experiences teaching AP students, it was understandable that she relied primarily on Sandra for guidance. Given the structured nature of AP writing, the discourse of the College Board was authoritative for Bree as evidenced by her choice of the phrase, "our hands are kind of tied," and stood in conflict with the discourse of both institutes that encouraged writers to write in a variety of ways.

From my conversations with Bree, she appeared to be trying to incorporate some of the ideas from the institutes, but when she referenced the use of writers' notebooks, she said she had used them with her Pre-AP class, but found it difficult to apply them in the ways that Buckner (2007) suggested. She distinguished the students' need to write rhetorical analysis, another form of writing, and did not think the notebook was appropriate for that type of writing. The AP curriculum dominated Bree's thoughts when

she spoke about her teaching. Most of her comments focused on the differences between her AP students and her "regular" students and when asked about the ideas from the institute, there seemed to be reasons associated with these levels and Bree's beliefs about the different groups that kept her from enacting the strategies from the summer curriculum.

Bree and the Discourse of the District Curriculum

In addition to the discourses of high stakes testing, the College Board, and Bree's mentor, the discourse of the latest district adopted curriculum caused much grief among the teachers in the district, including Bree. Both Britney and Sheila mentioned the confusion surrounding the adoption of this curriculum given the fact that the district had just completed "bundling" the state standards with the help of an expensive consultant, John Crain. The addition of C-Scope, a curriculum created by our local education service center, was now a non-negotiable for the teachers. Bree described the conflict she was experiencing:

> …but now…there's all this new that we're supposed to be incorporating into our classrooms, and there's all that's new that I learned that I want to incorporate into my classroom, so there's kind of this battle of okay, I really need to do what my district is asking me to do, but I really want to do something else you know, and how do I make all of it work together? This year is really strange. I feel like I'm a first year teacher again.

From her description, it was evident that C-Scope caused much stress, using the word "battle" to describe the competing discourses of the institutes, College Board, and C-Scope. Frustrated by the scripted curriculum that, according to Bree would work "if the world were a perfect place, the students were all on the level that they were supposed to

be at, C-scope would rock. The students aren't. And that's just the way it is." Presented by the education center as a "tool," Bree believed it was an "expensive tool, and like most school districts, when you buy an expensive tool, they expect you to use it." Thinking that the district was smarter than to think this curriculum would be the "magic fix," she thought the district bought it because they were afraid of the TAKS scores and wanted to help new teachers and "give them something they could say." In Bree's opinion, the district's adoption of this curriculum represented a deficit stance toward its teachers, and sent the message that the district did not believe the teachers knew what to say to students.

Creating Practice and Managing the Change Process

As a third year teacher, Bree was still learning about the landscape of schooling that included not only the classroom filled with students, but also a building with colleagues, a district with administrators, and a state with legislatures. In addition, each of these entities pulled at her with its own set of requirements spoken through a variety of discourses. Bree was forming her identity as a high school English teacher as she worked to manage the process that was conflicted by the competing discourses of high stakes testing, the College Board and her mentor, the district, and the summer writing institutes. Bree did not have a long history in the classroom like Britney and Sheila, so her practice was not as established. It was difficult to think of Bree in terms of "change" because she was just now establishing herself in the classroom. Every suggestion or directive from the literacy specialist, her mentor, the administrators, or the institute stood competition with

the internally persuasive discourses of her lived experiences and deficit thinking as they vied for her attention hoping to become persuasive.

Reflecting on the Remainder of Year

When Bree and I met in March, I asked her what she had planned for the remainder of the school year, and she replied, "That's a good question. I don't know yet. I haven't thought that far in advance." Because this was Bree's first year teaching a "regular" class of sophomores, she relied on her two colleagues who consistently taught this group of students. Bree explained, "Mandy does the hunting down, gathering, and planning for us. Whitney is in charge of the calendar and planning, what are we going to do on what day, and then I write the lesson plan and put them in the computer. So I'm kind of the third person to know what is going on." According to Bree, she regretted that the three of them did not have time to meet to reflect on the lessons and added that both Mandy and Whitney might not return to San Gabriel for the next year. Although Bree was sad at this prospect and thought it might be a good idea for her to be more involved in the planning so she would be better prepared for next year, she stated, "But I'm also a pretty confident teacher…I know what I'm doing."

Conclusion

Bree was forming an identity as a new teacher, and although she spoke about the conflicts within the authoritative discourses of high stakes testing, College Board, her mentor, and the two summer writing institutes, her interpretation of and responses to these multiple voices was also influenced by the internally persuasive discourses of her lived experiences and deficit thinking. With the exception of teaching the AP curriculum,

none of these interactions shook her confidence or diminished her agency as she authored herself as teacher who was learning to teach. She had a job to do and carried out the responsibilities of a teacher the best way she knew how.

Bree relied on her mentor, Sandra as well as Jule, the language arts specialist to help shape her practice. She made attempts to include some of the ideas from the summer writing institute into her practice but often abandoned their use due primarily to her beliefs about students' interests and abilities. Leading her classes with a confident voice, she guided the students through, what I would label a worksheet-focused curriculum.

The notion of change is troubled when thinking about a novice teacher such as Bree. It made more sense to think in terms of "creating" a practice rather than changing it. Bree illustrated the complicated processes for teachers who are new to the profession and must negotiate the landscapes of professional development and that of school during the first three years of teaching. One out of five teachers leave the profession after the first year (Fuller, 2002), and one out three teachers leave within the first three to five years (Darling-Hammond, 1998). In light of these statistics, Bree's story provided a window into these critical years and underscored the importance of considering how and why some discourses influence professional development experiences.

Chapter 6: Teacher Development and Change: Implications and Conclusions

The story just told included the teachers' experience in *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* as well as the time I spent in Britney, Sheila, and Bree's classrooms. It began with my personal account of how I came to explore teacher knowledge building and the change process. And now, in conclusion, it offers new ways to think about, plan for, and provide professional development in writing. It also offers new ways of thinking about how teachers come to know about their practice.

Theoretically, the most significant implication from the study is the need to revise how researchers, teacher educators, and those who provide professional development think about the cultural narrative of "change." Consideration must be given to the dialogic interplay among the various discourses, both authoritative and internally persuasive, that live on the interior landscapes of the teachers and the role each plays in the change process. And in response to the theoretical implications is a call for a different approach to professional development altering the current landscape. First, we must create culturally responsive professional development. Second, we need to focus on teacher identity and agency as a way to help teachers author themselves as more capable of reshaping their practice. Nested within identity and agency are explicit inquiries that engage teachers in an exploration of self—their lived experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives as well as participating in self-study collaborative research and the possible use of narrative inquiry as professional development for teachers to learn more about themselves and their practice.

Although the stories I told about Britney, Sheila, and Bree might appear as unsuccessful efforts to promote teacher change, they are indeed important stories in understanding how teachers appropriate and enact new knowledge in their classrooms. Often researchers showcase the best models of change and good practice. However, working with teachers who struggle with the real dilemmas from multiple landscapes and exploring why they struggle helped me begin to understand the complicated nature of change and the discourses that influenced this process.

The process began with *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007,* the four-day summer writing institute. Incorporating the teachers' request for content, Sara and Michelle drew primarily from their personal family stories to model generative writing and revision strategies. During institute presentations, they relied on their personal practical knowledge of teaching and told stories about their development as teachers coupled with stories about working with their students. Illustrating the ways in which they used the strategy with their students, both Sara and Michelle worked to create snapshots of their classrooms so the teachers could envision such interaction. While participating in the learning opportunities, the teachers also drew from their personal family stories and personal practical knowledge as they worked to construct new knowledge about the teaching of writing. Throughout the institute, the teachers used language that positioned the students as having deficits and lacking the necessary experiences to generate writing as they had. In addition, these stories were laced with references to the state mandated writing test. On many occasions, Sara and Michelle made the case for the inclusion of the strategy in the teachers' practice because it produced good results on the test. In response

to the readings and strategies, the teachers engaged in large group and small group conversations. Based on a social constructivist teaching approach, the teachers engaged in reading response activities that invited them to think and speak critically about ideas with their colleagues. As a result, the institute revealed several discourses that spoke within, between, and among the facilitators, Sara and Michelle, and the teachers, Britney, Sheila, and Bree, playing a role in their knowledge building. My observations in this setting led me to consider the multiple discourses that found voice in this setting: *lived experiences, personal practical knowledge, deficit thinking, high stakes testing,* and *change*.

Following the institute, Britney, Sheila, and Bree's stories illustrated the presence of these discourses in our conversations and in the teaching practices I observed. Their stories represented three different themes related to change: Britney's apparent lack of agency and feelings of powerlessness resulting in a "can't change" discourse, Sheila's reluctance to break way from the structure she knew so well resulting in an "afraid to change" discourse, and Bree's reliance on her mentor for guidance resulting in a "why change" discourse that spoke to the idea of appropriating her mentor's practices thus "creating" her practice rather than changing it. Although each story had a different focus, each story was influenced by similar discourses illustrating the multivoicedness of the two landscapes as well as the dialogic interplay between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

Over the course of the summer writing institute and the following school year in Britney's, Sheila's, and Bree's classrooms, it became apparent that the key to

understanding was in listening. Rather than focusing on changing the teachers' practice in accordance with our initial ideas of what "change" or effective writing instruction meant, it became equally if not more important, to consider how professional development needed to change to become a more effective context for teacher development. At different moments during the three interviews, Britney, Sheila, and Bree shared their thoughts about professional development.

Reflections on Professional Development Experiences

From the comments that follow, Britney, Sheila, and Bree voiced specific ideas about what constitutes effective professional development as well as those that fall short of their expectations. It was also evident from these conversations that both of the summer writing institutes, *San Gabriel Writes 2006* and *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* fulfilled what the teachers considered "effective." However, based on the stories that emerged from my classroom observations, it seemed the institutes did not go far enough in helping the teachers begin the process of reshaping the way the think about teaching and learning in a writing classroom.

Britney

According to Britney, professional development opportunities such as workshops/institutes that teachers choose for themselves are the most effective. Throughout her career, Britney attended professional development of her own choosing in language arts instruction in addition to days that were required to advance district initiatives. For Britney, good professional development offered "something new and innovative" and was something…

> I haven't seen before because I'm really, that's happening a lot. I don't know if it's just the longer you're in it (*teaching*), the more you see the same thing. I love anything on young adult literature, but I want new books. I don't want classics that I've seen a million times…I was scheduled for one last week, but I went to Kylene Beers…and all it really was, was clarifying something that I already know anyway, like how to use one of her strategies…Probable Passage.

As a learner, she said, "I don't always need to know 'why'…like the whole justification for it. I just want to see it, and use it. I can come up with my own. I can justify it myself." Unlike other moments in our conversations when Britney expressed doubt in her ability, when talking about professional development, she spoke confidently about her ability to make decisions regarding what she included in her practice. Elaborating on her process, she said:

> I have to do a lot of processing in my head like about, like if I'm going to try something in my classroom that sounds really great in a book, or that I've heard about, it takes me a long time to sit and decide how to manage it in my room so that it would make sense to me and make sense to them.
> Seeing too really helps me, like see a model of it.

Britney expressed her dissatisfaction with district-sponsored professional development and stated, "I like to choose my own. I don't particularly like getting the school—that kind of professional development." She cited three examples: Working with a consultant to bundle the knowledge and skills into six-week segments, including required resources and writing genres; a yearlong set of scripted lessons developed by the regional education service center; and a curriculum training that Britney, Sheila, and Bree referred to as "Education 101" that included topics such as writing the objective on the board, using graphic organizers, and creating test questions. Britney commented, "It was just not helpful."

In March, Britney attended a workshop offered by Dr. Randy Bomer at The Heart of Texas Writing Project on conferencing. Sheila and two other language arts teachers attended as well, and Britney thought, "It was helpful, and there were things I would definitely use, his philosophy, I guess." She referenced the three or four ideas as "things" but could not name the strategies. And even though nothing that was presented left her saying, "No way," she had not included any of the ideas in her practice. One explanation may have been the testing schedule and the pressure to prepare her students for the reading test in late April.

Unmotivated by stipends, Britney viewed the professional development opportunities as "something that I just very strongly need to go to," and when asked if attending four days of a writing institute in July was too far removed from the context of the school year, she replied:

> I mean it is hard to remember, you know, everything. Right at the time, it's like, "Oh, that's great. That's going to be wonderful," but then when we get to it, it's kind of like, "Oh, I don't remember how to do that or how that works or something like that," but I'm one of those people that, you know, I said earlier, I have to process just to the point where I know how to pace everything.

Sheila

Like Britney, Sheila enjoyed attending sessions on young adult literature and found them the most memorable. She said, "…it had to do with reading, books for reading or something of that matter," and based on Sheila's story, in which she indicated a comfort with teaching reading, this was no surprise. However, she quickly added, "Most of them [professional development workshops] are a wash. They weren't things I could always come back and use in my classroom." According to Sheila, professional

development was only effective if the presentation included ideas she could easily use upon returning to class. Otherwise, she characterized them as "a waste of time."

Referencing *San Gabriel Writes 2006* and *ReWrites 2007,* Sheila made the following comment in support of these opportunities:

> And I think that's what was, what was the difference about *San Gabriel Writes 2006* is that I knew we weren't doing enough. We needed to change our program, and it was like, it was exactly what I was looking for. So I was just more open to more things once I went to the two-week thing, and then I was more open to come back and try things with the kids. I felt like we were getting somewhere.

As was the case with Britney, it appeared that choosing to participate rather than being told to participate made a difference for Sheila.

Sheila contrasted her experience with the Heart of Texas Writing Project to that of other district initiatives, and stated, "Day and night. Day and night. Not even in the same ball game." Labeling one of these events as "least effective," Sheila, like Britney, referenced "Education 101" and said, "How many times in my lifetime have I heard this." Sheila used language such as "hostile, mad, and angry" to describe the mood during these video sessions and noted the difference between attending the writing institutes and these sessions commenting:

> Because there's, well in the two-week program, there's so much in-depth stuff. You walk through things. You're given time to do it. There's one-on-one if you need it. And these programs, it's thrown out. I've said many a time in these programs, "If we taught in our classrooms like they teach us in these programs, the kids would riot and burn the building down."

According to Sheila, the presenter's style played the most significant role in her learning. "If they're real caught up in it, then I tend to caught up with it."

Although Sheila expressed her overall satisfaction with the work of the Heart of Texas Writing Project, she said there were times when the ideas she learned during the summer happened too far away from the context of her classroom. “I’ll have these great ideas, but then they get lost somewhere or they don’t get processed.” She continued on this theme and added, “I’m more likely to implement something I get from a conference that I’ve gone to while school is going on…when I’m actually teaching…because it’s on my mind.” She offered the example of attending The Heart of Texas Writing Project’s day on conferencing. She referred to the content as “practical” and “real world,” and appreciated Dr. Bomer’s honesty regarding his successful as well as his less-than-successful attempts with some student conferences. Upon returning to her classroom, rather than having the students come to her, she acted on Dr. Bomer’s suggestion and walked around the room and met with students at their desks. In addition, as noted in Sheila’s story, she contrasted the immediacy of implementation she experienced while working side-by-side with Katherine to the two-month delay of the ideas from the summer institute.

Unlike Britney, the stipend made some difference for Sheila. She thought of it in terms of the district respecting her time and treating her like a professional when she said, “Well, it’s like, this is important enough to us to pay you. We recognize that we’re taking your time…So its… like they’re putting their money where their mouth is.”

Bree

As an early career teacher, Bree qualified her thoughts about professional development when she said, “Well, I haven’t been to too many. I went to a lot my first

year. I think got my one hundred fifty hours[5] in that year." However, Bree clearly preferred professional development that was "real." Referencing her Champs training (a discipline model), the writing institutes, and her gifted and talented training as her most memorable learning experiences, Bree explained that "real" meant, "not just theories, and this looks great on paper and happy feelings." She found the presenters in each of these events credible because they shared moments from their classrooms that connected to Bree's teaching experiences. She said:

> I like when a person comes in and says, 'Look, the kids get on your nerves, and they're not perfect, and there's sometimes when they're not going to write. Here's what you can do when you have those days.' …Great theories are all well and good, but if you spend two years in the classroom and thirteen years doing professional development, then I don't really trust you. You are not on the front lines. You do not know what you are talking about.

Bree's use of the phrase "front lines" may be an internally persuasive discourse describing the classroom as a place that was difficult to negotiate. I have heard this allusion to war many times, and it appeared as if Bree was speaking with a voice that was half hers and half a societal discourse imbedded in the culture of teaching. Having earlier described the classroom as a "battlefield," she expected a facilitator's authentic connection to the classroom. "…The more a professional development person is in the classroom and the more real life application that they can give, the better it tends to be," she said.

The idea that professional development needed to be applicable to classroom practice was a common theme among the three teachers. Bree expressed her discontent

[5] This number represents the number of Continuing Education Credits required in the first five years of teaching in the state.

with workshops that focused on the data analysis of the state mandated tests. During her second year of teaching, the district required the teachers to attend the training for the new curriculum, C-Scope. At the time, she said this program would not work, and thought, "Why am I listening to this? Why am I sitting through this?" Thinking that her ideas would work better, she referred to this as a "cynical teacher thing that we all have," and felt vindicated when, according to Bree, the lessons did not work for her students.

While attending a Barry Lane workshop, Bree found little relevance for her high school students and commented:

> …my kids at high school don't need to learn how to write a menu. They need to know how to write a research paper. They need to know what MLA is and how you use it, and so I think that was one that I went away going, 'Oh, you're annoying. You're an annoying hippie.' And then he brought out the guitar at the end of the day, and I just went, 'Oh, no!'

In addition to the conflict between Lane's creative ideas and the demands of the district, she also mentioned feeling overwhelmed with the additional information during the year. "I'm so focused on what I'm doing then, that I think, 'Well, I'll put that away until next year," she said. When I asked if summer writing institute was too decontextualized from her classroom to be effective, she replied, "I get more out of a week than one day or two. There is more time to absorb the information [in the summer]…a feeling that 'I'm done with last year. I can't change it, so what about the upcoming year.'"

An entry in Bree's writer's notebook said, "*My only concern now is being able to put all these ideas into practice. Sometimes it all seems so easy at workshops. Then you actually get to your classroom and…but we shall see.* She expanded on the idea during an interview:

> In a workshop, I don't have to worry about, can the students do this, the students need a copy of that, the students didn't bring their homework, these five are over here talking, I've go to do seating charts, nobody can be quiet. Okay we didn't get yesterday's concept, we need to go back and review that you know that doesn't happen in a workshop. It sounds great on paper. It looks great when we're sitting there talking about it with other professionals, but it's a different world in the classroom.

Barriers to Change

It was apparent from my conversations with Britney, Sheila, and Bree, that each found more value in choosing to attend professional development and resented district-mandated workshops that served to advance a district's agenda driven by the authoritative discourse of high stakes testing. In addition, they voiced their need for professional development to be applicable to their classroom and stated that attending the two summer institutes, *San Gabriel Writes 2006* and *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, better met their expectations finding value in the time spent at both. However, my data further suggested that multiple discourses, both authoritative and persuasive, inhibited their ability or desire to implement what they had learned in the summer writing institutes. Britney and Sheila voiced concern with the time between the institute and the beginning of school and found it easier to implement an idea that they learned during the school year, whereas Bree found it too difficult to think about adding something during the year because she was too focused and could not divide her attention. Regarding stipends, Sheila said that it was the district's way of valuing her as a professional; however, neither Britney nor Bree believed the stipend made a difference in their attendance at professional development. Another common theme centered on the mismatch between participating in the activity with other adults and applying the strategy with students. Finally, although both institutes

included topics related to diversity, the teachers' perspective shed light on the difficulties they encountered when they returned to their classroom to work with the students who sat in the desks.

Much can be gained from listening to teachers and working to create professional development opportunities that take into consideration the multiple landscapes they negotiate each day and the accompanying discourses that compete for their attention. Although the curriculum for the summer institute originated from a wish list generated by the teachers and included many of the topics they had requested, I could not have known how the authority of the high stakes testing discourse, the pervasiveness of deficit thinking, as well as their lived experiences and personal practical knowledge, would influence their knowledge building and the enactment of theses strategies in their classrooms.

The teachers' comments foreshadowed the issues that need to be resolved and illustrated the ways in which they have internalized, if not an authoritative, then certainly a persuasive discourse regarding what it means to engage in professional development. The idea that the content for professional development in writing consists primarily of helping the teacher build a toolkit of strategies and activities has a long history in the field. The prominent voices in the literature provide classroom models that offer ways to organize the classroom and curriculum for writing (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1994; Fletcher, 1992; Ray, 2006; Rief, 1992; Romano, 1987). Complementing these models are dozens of strategies such as the "Positive / Negative Graph" for topic generation, using a writers' notebook as way to chronicle the writing process, and creating a "Museum

Exhibit" of artifacts or generating three-word phrases to expand and deepen the writing on a specific topic. Although these strategies show promise in improving student writing, they play a small part in the change process.

My study suggests that strategies alone will not improve the instruction in writing classrooms. The common discourse pattern is "I tried these strategies, and they didn't work because 'my' kids can't…" or "Which strategy will help my students be more successful on the test?" The teachers live out their teaching lives in the context of the overwhelming discourses of high stakes testing and deficit thinking. These discourses surfaced during *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, but they were not explicitly addressed. Therefore, professional development settings need to become places where teachers are guided through a process to examine their deeply held assumptions of students, writing curriculum, and what constitutes knowledge. And, in order to accomplish this task, the Writing Project will need to provide professional development for the Teacher Consultants so they can in turn work with other teachers. We must begin to rethink what it means for teachers to engage in professional development and what it means to "change."

Rethinking the Change Narrative

Troubled by the word "change" and its implication that something is wrong with the teachers' practice, I now prefer to think in terms of "revision." In the same way a writer revises a piece of writing through additions, deletions, and rearranging the content, it makes more sense to approach professional development from this perspective. The word, "change," could be construed as oppressive requiring a "treatment" to fix

something that is not working. This deficit view of teachers suggests that providers of professional development need to consider not only the teachers' existing knowledge of content and writing pedagogy, but also their lived experiences and personal practical knowledge while preparing for the learning experience. "Consider" here also means to go beyond asking teachers to write about their personal experiences. It means inviting teachers to examine these stories as a way to understand their beliefs about students and writing curriculum.

Working on a landscape that changes yearly, often monthly, and sometimes weekly makes it difficult for the teachers to adopt new practices. The facilitators and their discourses themselves occupy a privileged place creating the possibility that the curriculum becomes an authoritative discourse. However, their discourses, with all the privilege associated with them, cannot trump the authoritative discourse of districts and the state. Teachers and the Writing Project never know when the district may say, "We are changing course. We are not working with HTWP any longer." Most often, a new initiative replaces the old without a word from the administration until fall inservice meetings, creating a climate of cynicism among the teachers and working against the possibility of teachers internalizing and enacting new knowledge or practices. Districts appear to have trouble committing to a professional development model that sustains itself over a period of many years. Their "We need to find the one solution that will solve the reading and writing problems for our students" discourse funnels down to the teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) and as a result, creates a frantic sense of "Let's try

everything new that we find," rather than encouraging critical reflection and purposeful revisions of practice.

In addition, we need to assess our expectations for change and the time required to make such changes. What I may view as "little or no" change in practice may actually be a significant change for the teacher. As evidenced by Britney, Sheila, and Bree, each teacher internalized, in the Vygotskian sense, the experiences in different ways as they negotiated district initiatives, their personal school biographies, their lived experiences growing up, and their personal practical knowledge, many of which stood in contrast to the teachings of the Writing Project. Each teacher in effect did experience some change. As Richardson (2003) argued, "Teachers change all the time. They reorganize their classrooms, try different activities and texts, change the order of topics, and emphasize different interpersonal skills" (p. 403). Linda Rief (1992) cautioned readers that she changed her practice one step at a time. These arguments and the teachers' stories presented here illustrate the need for patience and support as teachers "revise their practice" in the shifting landscape of their schools and state or national initiatives.

In support of this "revision of practice," the content and structure of the learning opportunities from the writing institute were congruent with what many theorists and researchers consider "good" practices for not only the classroom but also professional development. However, I maintain that neither the learning opportunities nor my study went far enough. My analysis of the summer institute and the teachers' classrooms was based on data collected over the course of a single school year, not long enough for teachers to process and enact the revisions to practice that I now contend will make a

significant and lasting difference in the teaching of writing. Given that revised practices take time and that beliefs about practice often lag behind enacting new practice, a longitudinal study might better represent this process and provide a means to document the teachers' progress. Therefore, I cannot say with certainty that the writing institute was ineffective. Though this limitation exists, it does not supplant the need to rethink the change narrative and the subsequent revisions for the content of professional development in general, and specifically in writing. My inquiry centered on knowledge building and the effectiveness of professional development and the change process. It now provides an opportunity to consider different frameworks that push the construct of professional development beyond the discourse, "If you change the activity and add strategies, you change the practice." Possible revisions include: culturally responsive professional development, a focus on teacher identity and agency, explicit inquiries that engage teachers in an exploration of self, self-study collaborative research, and the possible use of narrative inquiry as professional development.

Culturally Responsive Professional Development: "Knowing" the Teachers We Teach

Walking into the Board Room with Sara and Michelle, we were prepared with a plan for the four days. The exterior landscape included readings from research, both theoretical and practical, and strategies that Sara and Michelle had experienced success with their students. However, this exterior landscape, the room with fresh coffee brewing and goodies set out throughout the day, books sitting along the whiteboard tray, articles

stacked neatly on the tables, and student artifacts, did not take into account the interior landscapes of the teachers who soon entered the room.

From my experience at Central ISD, I was aware of the deficit discourse that was evident as I worked with the secondary English/language arts teachers at workshops as well as in their classrooms. Working in a large urban district in the shadow of No Child Left Behind with its high stakes accountability, I knew the pressures associated with melding personal beliefs about the teaching of writing with the state's expectations. As I listened to the teachers talk during the institute and read the transcripts from their small group discussions, I learned about their interior landscapes, those experiences that shaped their practice and were rooted in the relationships they had with families, colleagues, and school administrators. Although I understand that it is not possible for a facilitator to really "know" their audience in such an intimate way, I believe that coming to the setting with an explicit realization that the teachers have available funds of knowledge (Moll, 1995) and experiences that reflect their cultural, social, and linguistic experiences would make a difference in the types activities we create to promote thoughtful reflections. Such reflections would include, assumptions they have of students, their practice, and what constitutes knowledge.

For me, the irony lies in the fact that in our work with teachers, we often focus on the importance of cultural responsiveness—learning about and drawing from the lived experiences of our students in order to make the curriculum relevant for them (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2002); however, I am uncertain about the degree to which we engage in this same practice when planning professional development opportunities.

Knowing about Bree's experience growing up in East Texas and her mother's insistence on speaking "correctly" to avoid being stigmatized, and about Sheila's growing up with an alcoholic father that shaped a need to have stability and control, and Britney's personal reflections on her conflicted thoughts about chasing after material things to gain happiness changed the way I see the purposes for professional development. In addition to modeling strategies and helping teachers with the structure of writing workshop, I learned about the importance of "knowing oneself." [6]

Although Sara and Michelle are not "university teachers" in the strict sense, they represented the university and were teaching other adults. Bain (2004) suggested that the best university instructors create a "critical learning environment [in which] people learn by confronting intriguing…problems, authentic tasks that challenge them to grapple with ideas [and] rethink their assumptions" (p.18). When reflecting on the institute and the ways in which Sara and Michelle led the group of teachers, I believe they met Bain's standard. In addition, the idea that learners "feel a sense of control over their education" (p. 18) was fulfilled when the teachers met with Katherine to make a list of the ideas they wanted to learn more about. However, it appeared that even though we provided a curriculum based on choice, thinking this would enhance the change process, we failed to consider their need to grapple with ideas and assumptions regarding teaching, learning, and children.

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6 "Knowing oneself" should not be considered a once and for all concept, instead it should be seen as "knowing oneself" as a particular kind of teacher, mom, friend at a particular moment in time based on history and context. It's more about continually learning about oneself.

Through the writing activities and stories told, we did gain knowledge about the teachers' personal lives and those events that shaped their teaching identity. Their writing served the important function of building community while providing a place to "try on" new knowledge from the institute; however, there was no explicit talk about drawing from this talk to augment the change process. In addition, we had no conversations "about culture and its role in education," did not "take responsibility for learning about [the teachers'] culture and community," nor "use [the teachers'] culture as a basis for learning" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 98) while planning the curriculum. Prater and Devereux (2009) addressed the need for teacher educators to engage in professional development to "develop a more culturally responsive approach in their curriculum and interactions with others" (p. 21) and Farmer, Hauk, and Neumann (2005) generated a list of attributes based on Gay's (2000) theory of culturally responsive teaching to define what they meant by "teaching culturally responsive professional development" (p.61). The list included: (a) "validating the life-worlds and learning styles of teacher-learners," (b) "explicit…discussion of the diverse ways that our cultural and personal identities mediate our style of cognitive engagement," (c) "…development of self-regulation and socially aware critical thinking," and (d) "supporting the development of awareness…of the knowledge, skills, and value sets…associated with access to social, economic, and political power" (pp. 61 – 62). My initial intent of this inquiry focused on understanding the change process in the teachers' practice. Through this experience I came to understand the need to reframe professional development in a way that honors and draws

from the cultural, social, and linguistic identities of the facilitators, the teachers in attendance, and their students.

Identity and Agency: Authoring a More Capable Self

According to Flores and Day (2006), becoming an effective teacher is a complex process and "entails an interplay between different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives, beliefs and practices, which are accompanied by the development of the teachers' self" (p. 219). The landscape of the summer writing institute provided a space for the teachers to be in dialogue with Sara, Michelle and with one another. It was a place where multiple perspectives were represented through multiple voices and opened the "possibility of seeing, hearing, and understanding multiple interpretations" (Greene, 1988, p. 21). The landscape of the teachers' classroom represented a different kind of place. A place in which the enactment of new knowledge was possible if the teachers authored themselves capable of being change agents. Working against this authorship was "the powerful interaction between personal histories and contextual influences of the workplace" (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 230).

The societal discourses of lived experiences and deficit thinking illustrated "the key role of personal biography in mediating the making sense of teachers' practice and their beliefs about themselves as teachers, and in reshaping [their] identity" (Flores & Day, p. 230). In addition, the political discourse of high stakes testing seemed to limit the teachers' freedom to make personal decisions regarding their curriculum and supported Lasky's (2005) understanding that "a teacher's identity can be shaped by school reform and political contexts" (p. 901). With regard to my inquiry, the teachers voiced little

control over the events that took place in their classrooms, and rather than being curriculum makers, they became curriculum conveyers. However, Lasky posited that teachers are not "simply pawns in the reform process—they are active agents, whether they act passively or actively their actions are mediated by the resources available to them, the norms of their school, and externally mandated policies" (p. 901). Lasky's idea that teachers maintain their agency whether they are "active or passive," highlighted the importance of taking a proactive stance with teachers in professional development settings and the need for a stronger and more explicit focus on the connection between the personal biographies of the teachers, their existing practices and those introduced through professional development, and the contexts of school (Flores & Day, 2006). In addition, it is important to recognize that in many school districts, San Gabriel included, teachers are given scripted, teacher-proof curriculum that undermines the teachers' ability to make decisions about content and methodology. This loss of praxis results in a reduced sense agency, "positioning educators to become no more than the operative part of the system in which they work" (Latta & Kim, 2010, p. 137).

Thus, the inclusion of opportunities for teachers to reflect upon and consider their beliefs about teaching, the purpose of schooling, and the role of their personal histories in forming their teacher identities may lead to the consideration of engaging teachers in an exploration of "self" and the power of this knowledge in becoming an "active agent."

Knowledge of Self

In Landscapes of Learning, Maxine Greene (1978) stated, "To be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in

which we encounter our world" (p. 2). Greene's statement provides a way to further appreciate Lopez's (1995) description of the interaction between exterior and interior landscapes and also illustrates Vygotsky's theory of inner speech and the dialogic interplay that occurs intrapsychologically as we gain knowledge about ourselves. Her words emphasize the importance self-awareness and its role in understanding how we react to and eventually interpret our experiences as we learn. Calderhead (1996) described knowledge as "factual propositions and the understandings that inform skillful action" (p. 715) and often, professional development focuses on content such as strategies and methods of instruction. For many this is what constitutes knowledge; however, my inquiry points to the importance of making an explicit connection to Grossman's (1995) construct, "knowledge of self." As outlined in Chapter One, Grossman drew from the work of Elbaz (1983) and defined this domain as the "teachers' awareness of their own values, goals, philosophies, styles, personal characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses as they relate to teaching" (p. 22).

My participation in both settings led me to consider the idea that professional development opportunities might be more effective if they began with an inquiry into self through which teachers could explore "how they perform specific identities [that] maintain, resist, or transform teaching practices because context, history, culture, discourse, power, and ideologies influence their work (Fairbanks et al. 2010, p. 6). Writing institutes usually become more than a place where strategies are shared. The teachers are engaged in generating text about people, places, and experiences that are most significant to them. The writing is then shared with a partner or a small group of

colleagues revealing a tiny part of who they are outside the landscape of school. Comments such as, “I didn’t know that you…” or “I was surprised to hear that you…” or “I didn’t realize that Sue was so funny…” are written and spoken, building community and creating a safe place for writers to share personal moments with one another. Both the personal and professional writing that emerged from the writing institutes as well as notebook entries during the school year represented a source of untapped knowledge for teachers to learn how their lived experiences influence their beliefs about teaching, learning, and students.

Schwartz (2004) described students who explored language, voice, identity, and place by engaging in an inquiry about their homes and their lives in Appalachia. She, too, explored her own cultural and linguistic identity as a child who grew up in Appalachia and in the process realized how she could help her students “be themselves” (p. 17) and created their voices through their writing. Schwartz’s knowledge of self led her to open her classroom space to include the voices of children who had long been marginalized and stigmatized by their geographic location. Her work illustrated the value in teachers engaging in this process as a way to critically examine the many identities they form and enact as they negotiate the landscape of home and school. In the preface, I wrote about the questions I asked myself, wondering what prompted the department chair to use such strong deficit language as she described her students. Additionally, I was in search of explanations regarding the change process wondering why professional development was transformative for some but not others. In response to these scenarios, it seems likely that if “teachers make their beliefs explicit, and therefore, available for conscious examination

and action" (Fairbanks et al., 2010, p. 3), they would not only increase their knowledge of teaching, but also their knowledge of self, creating a stronger sense of agency.

Self-study groups. Self-study groups provide a context and a framework for an inquiry into self. Similar to Teacher Research Groups (TRG), a form of professional development grounded in the work of the National Writing Project (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; O'Donnell-Allen, 2001, Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006), self-study research provides a place for teachers to explore their teaching practice and interests in collaboration with other teachers. Both operate out of the tradition of participatory action research and foster a connection between teaching and research and are guided by the teachers desire to learn. In a somewhat different way, the tradition of self-study draws from postmodern theory in that it explicitly addresses the notion of transforming self and others (Latta & Buck, 2007). With particular attention to "personal values, assumptions, and beliefs about teaching and learning" (p. 193), teachers examine their personal histories and experiences as educators and "value personal sense-making alongside collective sense-making" (p. 191) around a common text.

In the summer writing institute, the teachers participated in conversations around common texts and were guided by response stems that provided a starting point for such talk; Sara, Michelle, and I chose the articles and chapters. The selections represented the teachers' choice of topics, but the conversations appeared to focus on understanding the text rather than understanding who we are in relation to the ideas in the text. In this way, I think the institute represented missed opportunities to have the teachers think about their beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions in relations to their students' interests and abilities.

Explicitly naming the thinking as "deficit" followed by reading, talking, thinking, and learning about children and the available funds of knowledge and experiences (Moll, 1995) would foster a conversation that critically examines their deeply held assumptions about their students and teaching. As a result, these new understandings might have influenced Britney, Sheila, and Bree's practice upon returning to their classrooms in the fall.

Narrative inquiry as professional development. Pushing against the notion of a professional development experience that focuses on strategies and quick fixes, engagement in narrative inquiry provides a way for teachers to "challenge taken-for-granted ideas and to raise disturbing questions about educational issues, asking all involved to reconsider and reorient their thinking" (Latta & Kim, 2010, p. 139). It is within this context that teachers are invited to interrogate their assumptions by exploring their experiences through multiple perspectives.

Drawing from Connelly and Clandinin (2006), Latta & Kim (2010) created a place for teachers, enrolled in a graduate class, to engage in a narrative inquiry about their practice. Writing weekly narratives that storied their teaching experiences while reading theoretical literature about teaching and learning, they generated a text for exploration and analysis. The weekly narratives did not stand-alone and were not static, but rather they served as a place for a recursive conversation that deepened the teachers' understanding of themselves as they examined both theory and practice. They argued that narrative inquiry "fosters professional identities that are in touch with self as teacher, self as individual, students, and given learning contexts" (p. 144) thus, promoting agency.

Earlier in the chapter, I claimed that the texts written by the teachers during and after the institute were an untapped source of knowledge. My study suggests that it might be beneficial for teachers to read their texts through a more critical lens to highlight the various discourses imbedded in the narratives. In the same way that I learned about knowledge building, enactment, and the process of change through Britney, Sheila, and Bree's stories, they, too, might learn how their lived experiences and their assumptions of their students influence the types of writing experiences they provide during class.

Narrative Understandings: Closing Thoughts

As I write my closing thoughts, I return to the opening quote from the Preface:

> People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi).

Being a researcher "new to the community," this narrative inquiry into teacher development and change provided many opportunities to examine an established model for professional development. The "stories lived and told" educated me and now potentially others who are interested in learning more about teacher development and change. Through careful analysis of the authoritative and internally persuasive discourses I interpreted as a possible influence on the change process, it became apparent that the curriculum did not go far enough in challenging the teachers' deeply imbedded beliefs about teaching and learning. Sara, Michelle, and I created learning opportunities based on the teachers' request for content as well as our reliance on a model provided by the National Writing Project. This approach resulted in a writing institute that was strategy

driven and positioned the writing institute as a place where teachers learn what we do to and for students, rather than thinking in terms of the subtexts and the narratives that reside at the heart of understanding how facilitators and teachers author themselves as teachers of teachers and writing teachers.

The stories written and told about *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* and Britney, Sheila, and Bree's classrooms were enhanced by the theoretical lens of Vygotsky's (1981) theory of inner speech, and Bakhtin's (1981) theories of multivoicedness and authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. The stories illustrated that we can have many conflicting ideas occurring at once, depending on the context, and it is through this dialogism that we develop our beliefs and possibly begin to understand their origin and the way they influence our decision-making.

My narrative inquiry explored the landscapes of the professional development experience and that of Britney, Sheila, and Bree's classrooms and is significant for its contribution to the relatively limited research on writing instruction and the change process in secondary classrooms. With the exception of Levin (2003), there are few studies that address teacher development for practicing teachers. With regard to my findings and implications calling for rethinking the change narrative, reframing professional development as a culturally responsive event, and guided inquiries into self, the literature is relatively limited. Interestingly, there is a large body of research that explores these same topics in the context of university teacher preparation programs, and my inquiry further parallels the findings from this literature. Focusing on the ways in which preservice teachers authored their professional identities, Rogers, Marshall, and

Tyson (2006) analyzed the dialogic narratives that emerged from a weekly seminar. They, too, drew from Bakhtin (1981) as they discovered the "multiple voices" (p. 60) within the group and the influence of the teachers' lived experiences on their views of teaching. Similarly, Allen and Hermann-Wilmarth (2004) began to think of their preservice teachers as "complex cultural beings" (p. 219) and as teacher educators made a commitment to learn more about their students as a way to prepare them to be culturally responsive teachers. In addition, they questioned how they were "reshaping [their] curriculum, changing relationships, and adjusting [their] instructional strategies based on the unique cultures [their] students share[d] with [them]" (p. 215). Both researchers, who were also professors in a teacher preparation program, began writing their own narratives to explore their cultural identities as a way to "change the setting, experiences, and actions that might influence the character development—our own, that of our students, and that of their students" (p. 214). Citing Britzman (2000), Allen and Hermann-Wilmarth found that when a teacher engages in a close examination of "habituated knowledge" (p. 214), they often uncover moments that interrupt the teachers' thinking about teaching and learning

Through a narrative representation of the events the reader gains the ability to interact with the text and construct meaning. Geertz (1985) set a high standard for representing qualitative data when he stated:

> Now that ethnographies look at least like romances as much as lab reports, ethnographers have to convince us…not merely that they themselves have merely "been there," but had we been there we should have seen what they saw, felt what they felt, concluded what they concluded (p. 110)

In the stories written about the institute and Britney, Sheila, and Bree's classrooms, I made every attempt to let the voices of the teachers speak for themselves to create this sense of "being there" for the reader of this text. At times, I found it difficult to reduce my "infiltrating" voice (Voloshinov, 1973) that added adverbs and adjectives to describe my interpretation of the teachers' voices as well as their actions. Throughout this process, I continually worked to reduce my own biases and eliminate an evaluative stance when analyzing the narratives. Coming from a position in the district central office, I spent a great deal of time in teachers' language arts classrooms observing and providing professional development intended to improve their practice. Moreover, my inspiration for this inquiry grew from my conversations with teachers in Central ISD as they struggled to teach a diverse population of students, as well as the opening conversation at *San Gabriel Writes 2006.* Eisner (1990) stated:

> In qualitative studies the "researcher's background can influence the way in which the situation is described [and] interpreted…personal biography is one of the tools researchers work with; it is the major instrument through which meaning is made and interpretation expressed. It is not an interference; it is a necessity (p. 193).

In keeping with Eisner's assertion, I have had to continually consider my own story and how it has influenced the stories I told—a story of a "researcher new to their community" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi) with hopes of charting a path to understanding the complicated nature of change.

None of these stories would have been possible without the group of twelve teachers who welcomed me as I videotaped, audio-taped, and joined their conversations during the four days at *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*. In addition, I appreciated the

opportunity to learn from Britney, Sheila, and Bree as they opened their classrooms and made themselves available yet vulnerable to this process. The stories about the three teachers illustrated the many struggles facing teachers in the context of professional development and school reform, yet even in this climate, the teachers maintained a professional stance. They came each day prepared for class, worked diligently for their students, and attended professional development they believed would help them be better writing teachers. My engagement in this inquiry yielded valuable lessons about the expectations for change and that of professional development. The story of the institute and the teachers' stories revealed important insights into teachers' knowledge building, the discourses that influence knowledge building, and the degree to which they enact new knowledge in their practices. These teachers and this study have offered new ways to think about professional development.

Appendix A

Methods

This appendix describes the data collection and analysis process that I used in my exploration of how teachers build knowledge in the context of a shared professional development experience, and how the teachers' beliefs, nested in their storied lives, influenced the degree to which this new knowledge led to a change in practice in writing classrooms. As noted in Chapter 2, my inquiry took place on two landscapes, the site for *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* and the classrooms of my three focal teachers.

Research Site

My study was situated in a small rural town in central Texas and included two locations—San Gabriel High School, the site for the professional development and the classrooms of my three focal teachers, Britney, Sheila, and Bree. At the time of the study and according to district records, the enrollment of racial/ethnic groups was as follows: Latino (50.3%), White (33.9%), African-American (14.9%), Asian/Pacific Islander (0.3%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (0.6%). Of this population, 58.1% were considered economically disadvantaged while 9% were labeled as English Language Learners. In contrast to the student population, 69 % of the teachers were White, 24% were Latino, 6.4% were African-American, and .6% was Asian/Pacific Islander.

The district has one primary school (grades PK-2), one intermediate school (grades 3-5), one middle school (grades 6-8), and one high school (grades 9-12). According to the Texas Education Agency's current online statistics, San Gabriel ISD had been rated Academically Acceptable. With respect to achievement on the writing

portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, in 2007, 85 % of all students met the minimum passing rate of 65%. While 93% of White students met the passing standard, only 79% of Latino and economically disadvantaged students were successful.

San Gabriel is both an agricultural and manufacturing–based community with a growing population. While the town is considered part of a growing metropolitan area, it is the most individual and rural community in the area. Located 35 miles northeast of a major city in central Texas, this community has a population of 14,700. Today, this community is experiencing rapid economic growth in a housing market that is overtaking what was once cotton-producing farmland.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I have developed a close relationship with the teachers and administrators in San Gabriel. San Gabriel ISD is a district that supports the professional learning and development of its teachers, the teachers are open to new ideas and willing to talk about their practice, and it has a diverse student population. Based on these attributes, my interest in the ways in which teachers build knowledge from a professional development experience, and the district's commitment to offer a follow-up to previous professional development in writing, I believed San Gabriel ISD was a good location for my work.

Participants

The participants in *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* consisted of twelve female teachers who attended the institute during the week of July 30, 2007. This particular group of teachers was part of the 23 teachers who attended *San Gabriel Writes 2006* and had expressed an interest in learning more about the teaching of writing. Four of the 12

participants taught at San Gabriel High School and one of these was the ELL teacher. Three taught at San Gabriel Middle School while the remaining five were on the faculty of Eastside Elementary School where one taught third grade, three taught fourth grade, and one taught fifth grade. They ranged in teaching experience from 3 – 30 years. Figure 1 depicts these ranges:

Figure 1. *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007* Participants

Teacher	Campus	Grade	Subject	Approximate Years of Experience	Ethnicity
1. Janice	EES	5	Reading	4	White
2. Sally	EES	4	ELA	20	White
3. Glenda	EES	4	ELA	18	White
4. Kelly	EES	4	ELA	3	White
5. Cathy	EES	3	ELA	3	White
6. Britney	SGMS	7	ELA & Pre-AP	12	White
7. Sheila	SGMS	8	ELA & Pre-AP	30	White
8. Bree	SGHS	10/11	Pre-AP Eng II; Eng II; Pre-AP Eng III	3	White
9. Mandy	SGHS	9/10	Pre-AP Eng I; Eng II	2	White
10. Laney	SGHS	9-12	ELL	25	White
11. Sandra	SGHS	12	AP Eng/Academic Decathlon	26	White
12. Jule	SGMS	6-8	Librarian	18	White

In addition, the two facilitators, Sara and Michelle were a part of the study and considered participants. Both facilitators were Teacher Consultants from the Heart of Texas Writing Project, a University of Texas at Austin site for the National Writing Project. Sara worked as a fourth grade teacher and had twenty-four years of experience, and Michelle taught high school English and had ten years of experience. Both worked in different but nearby districts.

Because writing in secondary classrooms has been studied far less than reading and/or writing in elementary classrooms, I chose two teachers from the middle school and one teacher from the high school. I made the decision to ask Britney, a seventh grade teacher with twelve years of experience; Sheila, an eighth grade teacher with thirty years of experience; and Bree, a high school teacher with two years of experience. With a total of seven secondary teachers in attendance at *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, I focused primarily on the teacher's grade level and years of experience with the aim of representing a diverse group of participants. In addition to these criteria, I also considered teaching assignments and class schedules. I decided not include Jule because she was the librarian at the middle school, or Sandra who taught AP classes exclusively. Although, I wanted to observe Laney, the ELL teacher at the high school, scheduling conflicts made this too difficult. As a result, Britney, Sheila, and Bree welcomed me into their classrooms during the 2007-2008 school year for the follow-up interview. I discussed my study and asked if they would be interested in being a participant. In addition to the teachers, their students were asked to participate as well. Class size in the high school is in the range of 25-32 students and in the middle school, 25 students. The parents of all students were asked to provide active consent for their child's participation in the study. The consent form included a letter from both the teacher and me explaining the project. These forms were provided in both Spanish and English. If parents chose not to allow their son or daughter to participate, the student was not penalized in any way and no artifacts or recorded activities connected to these students were collected or analyzed. Additionally, the students had the opportunity to assent to their participation in the study.

Data Collection Techniques

My study employed a qualitative research design with data consisting of transcripts that represented the discourse of the teaching and learning experience in the institute, i.e. comments and questions in response to the curriculum and conversations in small group interactions, including expanded field notes of my observations and initial reactions; audio/videotapes of the mini-lessons, and large and small group discussions; interviews with the 12 participants; and artifacts such as written reflections and their writer's notebooks. The initial data were collected during the four-day (July 30 – August 3, 2007) summer writing institute. I attended the entire institute and took into consideration the layout of the learning environment to maximize the collection of data while minimizing the interruption to the flow of the learning. During the daily mini lessons and debriefing of ideas, the video camera was located in the back left corner of the room and provided a full view of the presenters and participants; however, the camera was focused on the two presenters so as not to intimidate the participants. A flat microphone was positioned in the center of the room to capture the conversation. During the small group discussions of articles, strategies, and/or ideas, a tape recorder was placed at each table to record the discussion. I asked one person in the group to be responsible for turning the recorder on at the start of their conversation. I did not videotape the small group discussions with the exception of the grade-level breakout session on the last day of the institute. During this time I moved from group to group filming, interacting with the teachers, and making observational notes.

Through my work with the two facilitators in developing the curriculum, we included the following opening reflection to gain insight into their current practice: "What does a day in your writing classroom look like? What are you doing? What are your students doing? What does this interaction look like? How is it going?" These reflections served as an entry point into my study as a way to "show" not "tell" what the teachers believe about the teaching of writing. They started with this writing on Day one and then on Day four, after Sara and Michelle presented to their respective grade-level groups of teachers, they returned to these papers and added the ideas they might incorporate into their practice this coming year. The actual prompt was presented in this way: "Here is where I am today; here is where I hope to go this year; this is what I am still wondering about; I have these questions and concerns."

The teachers and teacher consultants were observed and videotaped each day. An additional source of data was the participants' writers notebooks from *San Gabriel Writes 2006* that included personal writing pieces as well as reflections on the previous summer's learning experience.

In late October and early November, following the institute, I met with Britney, Sheila, and Bree to conduct the interviews that served as a reflection on their participation in the institute. In early December 2007, and continuing through May 2008, I collected data from each of the three teacher's classrooms. Both the high school and middle school had a 90-minute block of time for English. Based on the recommendation from my dissertation committee and with the help of Britney, Sheila, and Bree, we created a two-week rotating schedule that I have included as Appendix C. We all agreed

that it was important to focus on one teacher for a two-week period, then move on to the next, and then return after four weeks. This plan afforded me the opportunity to observe the teachers' classrooms over a longer period of time. In total, I observed in Britney's classroom 16 days, Sheila's classroom 15 days, and Bree's classroom 15 days, and interviewed each teacher three times over the course of the school year. There were times when I doubled up my visits to accommodate the district and state testing schedule so I could observe the instruction during these times.

Data in the form of transcripts of the classroom talk during writing instruction (student comments and questions in response to the curriculum and conversations in small group interactions); field notes and expanded field notes, audio/videotapes of observations and unstructured interviews; and artifacts such as student writing samples, teacher reflections, and writers' notebooks belonging to Britney, Sheila, and Bree were collected. I expanded my field notes the evening after I visited each class. In addition, I often digitally recorded my thoughts on my drive home or back to campus after my observations. This provided an opportunity for me to reflect about the events and conversations so I would not lose that initial response. These texts were my first attempt at interpretation coupled with narrative constructions of the events that week. In addition, all classroom visits were audio taped, and I videotaped each classroom observation during the second and third rotations times throughout the course of the study. As I entered each classroom for my observations, I usually took a seat in the back of the classroom, recording my notes on my laptop, but often, I spent some of the time circulating around the room talking to and working with the students.

Participant Observations

In qualitative study, the researcher takes on the unique role of participant observer. Unlike objectivist research in which the inquirer is removed from the setting and attempts a "fly on the wall" status, this methodology requires the researcher to move along a continuum that ranges from mostly observing to mostly participating. The researcher carefully observes people, interactions, and events while engaging in ongoing analysis of the observations for meaning (Glesne, 1999). The researcher is not judging, but rather "constantly negotiating, constantly reevaluating, and maintaining flexibility and openness to an ever-changing landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71) as they strive to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Glesne, 1999).

As a participant observer in this study, I not only observed and recorded field notes but also interacted with the group during the four-day institute. Although I worked with Sara and Michelle in creating the curriculum for the institute, I was not responsible for any of the direct instruction or facilitation of any activities. However, I participated in the small group discussion when the teachers discussed articles and participated in small group activities, such as "conversational response." This response activity required us to interact with text by recording our reactions and insights to the text, then passing it to the person on their left. This person read the comments and responded by adding their thoughts. Through this activity, I engaged in learning through writing, but I also listened to topics being discussed and keyed into what knowledge was of particular interest to each teacher, how much time they spent talking about the topic, and how and in what ways the topic changed. The focus of my observations was on the ways in which the

teachers reacted to the curriculum. When I thought it was appropriate, I interjected a question or comment; however, I was aware that my questions/comments might have led the talk where I wanted it to go, fulfilling my research agenda, rather than where the teachers wanted it go had I not been a part of the group. I was cognizant of the power of my position as a person who the district had hired to come in as a presenter and now was in the role of the researcher from the University.

When I entered the teachers' classrooms in early December 2007, my role as participant observer changed in that my observational focus shifted from the teacher in a shared knowledge building setting to one in which she was the teacher interacting with her students. Each of their roles had changed, and I was interested to see if they were using any of the strategies they learned in the institute. During my time in Britney, Sheila, and Bree's classrooms, our relationships grew in positive ways. As a trusted other in the classroom, they freely shared their thoughts about teaching and learning about writing. Acting as an interpreter and the author of the story I chose to tell about each of the teachers, I continually worked to reduce my evaluative response to the events I observed.

Data Sources

With Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as my mentor text for conducting a narrative inquiry, I used their three categories of text: field text, interim text, and research text.

Field texts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the term *field texts* for the purpose of naming a variety of texts that are possible while a researcher is in the field as a participant-observer. Field texts "assist memory to fill in the richness and intricacies of the lived stories and the landscape" (p. 80). It is through the construction of these various

field texts that the researcher is able to move along the continuum of full participant to full observer. During the process of composing field texts, the researcher is fully involved with the participants but remains aware of her own stories as well as the stories of the larger landscape. Field texts are interpretive records of our experiences and in my study may: teacher stories, the researcher's story that positions her in the midst of the temporal moment, autobiographical writing, journal writing, field notes, daily notes, full of detail, letters written between researcher and participant, conversations composing in a face to face encounter, research interviews, family stories and stories of families, documents such as policy documents, school district, board policy, contextual documents generated by the English department or team of teachers, school; and photographs.

For my field texts, I maintained a research journal (Merriam, 2001) that was set up dialectically with my observations written on the left side of the page and my thoughts, reactions, insights written on the right side, opposite the observation. This process enabled me to have a conversation with myself as I moved between observation and reflection about emerging patterns, interpretive hunches, as well as my own biases (Glesne, 1999). After leaving the each classroom, I read through my notes to clarify and expand on them.

Interim texts. Interim texts may take various forms and act as a bridge between the field texts and the research text. These interpretive accounts are "designed to be shared and negotiated with the participants"(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). They may be attempts to write a storied account of an event or they may take the form of an analytic memo (Glesne, 1999). Regardless of the form they take, it is important that

these texts be shared with the teachers with the expressed desire for a response to the written text.

Although I created these texts, and made every effort for the teachers' voices to speak for themselves in my findings, I did not share them with Britney, Sheila, or Bree. When I wrote my proposal, I fully intended on sharing the texts. However, the stories represented the various ways these teachers struggled to include new knowledge in their practice. And oftentimes, it appeared as if their assumptions about the students' lack of experience and ability limited the degree to which they enacted new knowledge. I wrote about the institute and the teachers' classroom based on conversations, notebook entries, and observations, and much of what I experienced painted a very real, but unflattering picture of both landscapes. Therefore, it was difficult to think about sharing any of my writing with Britney, Sheila, or Bree.

Research text. `The research text positioned the study theoretically and socially. Personally, I was inspired by the work of Sunstein (1991) and Fairbanks (1992). Both of their dissertations were written as narratives. There was no "formal" delineation between the stories and the application of theory—both were woven together in a way that enabled the reader to feel as if they were a part of the story, while also becoming more knowledgeable from the theoretical support for the interpretations. The text that included the Preface and Chapters Two through Six were written as a narrative. Chapter One, Theoretical Discourses, seemed to take on a hybrid organization as it was not fully a narrative, but it was not written as a traditional literature review either. I made the

decision to include the description of my methods as an Appendix, so as not to interrupt the reading of the stories.

Interviews

Ethnographic interviews resemble a friendly conversation with most researchers collecting a sizeable amount of their data through casual conversation, introducing questions as the conversation progresses (Spradley, 1979). In addition, interview questions need to address the research questions and grow from participant observation so they are better connected to the observed behavior (Glesne, 1999) and serve as a way for teachers' voices to be heard (Britzman, 2003).

My data included three interviews that spanned my time in Britney, Sheila, and Bree's classrooms. Granting the teachers' request that I wait until school was well underway before scheduling a time to meet, I arranged the first interviews for October. We communicated via email and met at their convenience. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. The purpose of these interviews was to hear the teachers' talk about the following topics: a) their teacher preparation programs, b) classroom practices in writing instruction, c) their students—how they differ from each other and yourself and how the teachers address these differences, d) memorable professional development experiences and what made these particular learning experiences stand out in their memory, and e) challenges they face in teaching writing.

The second interviews, focused on the teachers' lived experiences, elicited a conversation about the story of their growing up, as well as their teaching story. These conversations took place mid-year and were scheduled according to the already

established observation schedule—Britney in January, Bree in February, and Sheila in March. The final interview focused on the challenges they continued to face as they tried to make sense of their teaching of writing. During these semi-structured interviews, I continually moved the talk to the recounting of an event(s) for the purpose of "showing" rather than "telling" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) how the teachers' beliefs intersected with professional development and their classroom practice.

Because my intention was to tell a story of the institute, as well as a story about each of the three teachers, I relied on Reissman's (2004) work on narrative interviewing for guidance in asking questions that would elicit stories of experience. According to Reissman, "narrative interviewing means following participants down their trails" (p. 709), and I followed her suggestion and used phrases such as, "Tell me what happened…," "Can you remember a particular time when…," What happened that made that memorable…" (p. 710) during my conversations with Britney, Sheila, and Bree. Reissmann cautioned against the exclusive use of interview data and found it necessary to include observations, conversations, and videos to support the interpretation and subsequent narrative representations.

To broaden my understanding of the classroom events, informal interviews took place throughout the study as the teachers and I engaged in a reflective dialogue regarding the teaching and learning events in the writing classroom. These face-to-face encounters were approached from a "How's it going?" position and were flexible and exploratory in nature (Merriam, 2001).

Data Analysis

When researchers draw upon qualitative methods of analysis, they associate words such as "exploration," "discovery," and "inductive" with this process. Every attempt is made to approach the data without any preexisting expectations so patterns may emerge from the data (Patton, 1990); therefore, I first determined what data I had. Beginning with the data from the institute, I analyzed my field texts making additional observations and comments, viewed the taped events, read the transcripts from the small group conversations, and studied each focus teachers' writer's notebooks from both summer institutes. Throughout this process, I paid particular attention to their participation and comments during this event. In addition, I looked carefully at the ways in which the facilitators, Sara and Michelle, engaged the teachers in the learning process. Drawing from Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the initial entry resulted in the identification of "character, place, scene, plot, tension, end point, narrator, context, and tone" (p. 131). I read and reread the texts while making note of dates, the context of the field note, the people who were involved, and topics. This narrative coding of the text yielded information regarding the places where actions and events occurred, story lines that were interconnected, gaps or silences that became apparent, tensions, and continuities and discontinuities that appeared in the data.

The process of identifying "narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual's experience" (p. 133) was a recursive process and required my reentrance into the data as new questions emerged. I looked specifically for the ways in which these data illustrated the theoretical and social significance regarding how teachers

build knowledge and how their beliefs about teaching and learning influenced the knowledge they valued. Through this analysis of the discourse, several themes emerged that I eventually named "discourses" that played a role in the degree to which the new knowledge was persuasive influencing the teachers' ability to build new knowledge—the discourse of lived experiences and personal practical knowledge, the discourse of deficit thinking, the discourse of high stakes testing and the discourse of change.

I repeated this process with regard to my time in the three focal teachers' classrooms. Rereading and commenting on field texts, viewing and listening to the taped events that documented the teaching and learning in the teachers' classrooms, reading their writers' notebooks, reading the transcripts from the three interviews. While I initially analyzed the data from the institute to look for patterns regarding knowledge building, the focus for my entry into the classrooms was centered on the ways in which this new knowledge changed or did not change the teachers' practice of teaching writing.

After identifying the discourse themes, I examined more closely each discourse with respect to Bakhtin's (1981) work on authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. The second level of analysis drew from my mentor text, *Dialogic Narratives of Literacy, Teaching, and Schooling: Preparing Literacy Teachers for Diverse Settings*. This study conducted by Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson (2006) provided a way to understand how the teachers internalized knowledge. Drawing from the work of Bakhtin (1981), these researchers developed a framework to analyze the "dialogic narratives" of pre-service teachers. Based on Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory, Rogers et al. (2006) defined dialogic narrative as "the stories told within the context of related utterances and

discourses." They used his theory to situate the teachers' stories "in the discursive interplay of teaching, literacy, and community," believing, as did Bakhtin, "that identities are authored in the context of dialogue" (p. 205). Therefore, I analyzed the content—looking for possible moments of assimilation of the authoritative discourse (the writing institute curriculum is one example) into the teacher's internally persuasive narrative of lived experiences and personal practical knowledge. This exploration of dialogic narratives, the interplay between the authoritative discourse and the internally persuasive discourse coupled with Vygotsky's notions of inner speech and internalization leading to transformation, connected my analysis to the theoretical frame for my inquiry.

The third level of analysis took me to a more specific theme related to each of three focal teachers individually. Asking myself, "How would I describe Britney, Sheila, and Bree's feelings about the change process in one phrase, I generated the following themes: Britney, "can't change;" Sheila, "afraid to change;" and Bree, "why change?" Creating a table to "map the cases," I listed examples from the data to support my claim. This process culminated with the creation of an organizational frame for each text and was continually modified and complicated as I developed each case.

For example, Wood and Kroger (2000) emphasize the need to "do discourse analysis" rather than "use discourse analysis" (p. 26) and recommend a bricolage approach (Erickson, 2004; Wood and Kroger, 2000; Crotty, 2003) by incorporating inventive measures to address particular tasks. This is how I viewed the process of analysis. I remained open to other possibilities the data presented while remembering that

within the paradigm of constructionism; there are only useful interpretations (Crotty, 2003).

Trustworthiness

Qualitative studies utilize multiple data sources to enhance the trustworthiness of the interpretation (Glesne, 1999, Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation is one of the validity procedures that researchers rely on as they "search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). To increase the confidence in my data and analysis, I used a variety of sources including participant observations, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, research journal, student writing samples, other school/policy documents, the teachers' writers' notebooks, and audio and videotapes. Closely related to triangulation is the continual practice of looking for disconfirming evidence (Miles and Huberman, 1994). After identifying the discourses that influenced the knowledge building, I looked for data that supported as wells disconfirmed my interpretation. Realizing the importance of a prolonged engagement to the validity of the data I collected, I added a third rotation to my observation schedule and stayed engaged with the teachers through May 2008. And finally, already knowing the value of having a peer reviewer (s), I relied on my co-chairs, Dr. Fairbanks and Dr. Maloch to push me in ways that I could not have imagined. In addition, I sought the advice of fellow colleagues, those associated with the university and those who I know through my affiliation with the Heart of Texas Writing Project. In particular, Dr. Lora Darden, who was a classmate of mine and who was just ahead of me in this process, listened and offered insights that have helped me complete this endeavor.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity requires the researcher to "self disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Characteristically, narrative inquiry begins with the researcher's story and how they have come to ask the questions they are exploring. It was through my opening autobiographical narrative that I positioned myself in the study and told my story about the ways in which I have been affected by the field work, the relationships I have developed with the teachers, and the process of writing other peoples' stories. Because of the potential risk of my reflexivity becoming a form of self-therapy, it is only my story in this regard. My work was primarily to tell the teachers' story, foregrounding the teachers' voices (Britzman, 2003), while remaining fully aware of the ways in which my lived experiences as a White, middle-aged woman, mother, wife, teacher, university student, and current researcher shaped my beliefs, attitudes, values, and interests. This awareness afforded me the opportunity to monitor my subjectivity and draw upon it as a resource that aided in a more valid interpretation of the data as I attempted to represent the teachers' stories (Glesne, 1999). As a participant observer, the researcher moves back and forth between the subjective stance in an attempt to become one with the group, and the objective stance in which they are standing outside of the group. Both stances, insider and outsider, address the ethical considerations necessary for the researcher to position themselves in such a way as to reduce the influence of their epistemology on the collection of data and subsequent analysis.

Conflicted by this internal struggle between the subjective stance of "going native" and the objective stance of being "a fly on the wall," Roman (1993), a naturalistic

ethnographer, argued "for an alternative to the subject/object dualism, one that makes it possible to think of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity not as static, fixed historically unknowable or unnamable. Rather, the relationship is conceived as dialectical and shifting, operating through multiple and conflicting sets of discourses and power relations" (p. 280).

It wasn't until one of my professors remarked, "Those being researched own the data" (Cary, 2006, class discussion), had I thought more carefully about the ethical dilemma that presents itself when representing others. Therefore, the value of Roman's (1993) work lies in the dialogic nature of her research that evolved through her thoughtful reflection about her role as a researcher who brought her academic, white, middle class, feminist perspective to the process. This hybrid way of knowing that included the girls in her study as researchers through the joint construction of questions and the possibility that the young women of Jamison might "collectively produce an account of the work together" (Roman, 1993, p. 303) created an environment in which the researcher and the researched worked together to construct meaning rather than the process resembling someone doing something **to** another. When the researcher's interests and beliefs are equally attended to as the interests and beliefs of those being studied, the likelihood of a one-side representation—that of the researcher—is reduced and replaced with a representation that includes the many voices of those engaged in the relationship.

In closing, it is of critical importance to note my awareness that the stories I wrote and told about the events of the summer writing institute, *San Gabriel ReWrites 2007*, as well as the stories about my three focal teachers, Britney, Sheila, and Bree, are one of

many possible stories. In no way do I claim that my representation is the only representation possible. The stories are a reflection of my relationship with the teachers at this particular time and were influenced not only by the ways in which the teachers were positioned on the two landscapes, but also the ways in which I was positioned as a colleague, mentor, and researcher.

Appendix B

San Gabriel ReWrites 2007: Daily Schedule

Day 1: Morning

8:30 – 9:00 Sara
Whole Group/Individual

- Writing time—Opening reflection

"What does a typical day in your writing classroom look like? What are you doing? What are your students doing? How is it going?"

Whole group

- Share responses

9:00 – 9:30 Sara
Whole Group/Lecture

- Rationale for text—Buckner, A. (2005). *Notebook know-how: Strategies for the writer's notebook*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- Overview of the Buckner text
- Buckner—organizing the writers' notebook

9:30 – 10:15 Michelle
Whole Group/Modeling

- Buckner's "Launching the Notebook" through generative writing—Crayola Characters.

Whole Group/Individual

- Writing time to create two characters

Whole Group

- *Share responses*

10:15 – 10:30

- Break

10:30 – 11:30 Michelle
Whole Group/Modeling

- Collecting bits of language for quick-write triggers

Whole Group/Individual

- Writing time—teacher participation in activity

11:30 – 12:00 Sara
Whole Group/Interactive Lecture

- Using reading/writing connections for generative writing i.e. *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes for writing about your name.

12:00 – 1:00

- Lunch

Day 1: Afternoon

1:00 – 1:45 Sara

Whole Group/Modeling

- Reading/writing connection—*The Bee Tree* by Patricia Polacco

Whole Group/Individual

- Writing time—"Write about something you chased."

Small Group/Table share

- Share responses

Whole Group

- Share the highlights from their small group discussions

1:45 – 2:10 Michelle

Whole Group/Modeling

- Buckner—Finding Patterns in your writing that leads to a topic

Whole Group/Individual

- Look back through your entries from today and identify a pattern

2:10 – 2:30 Sara

Whole Group/Modeling

- Buckner—Strategy for expanding a topic—"3 X 3." Generate three-word phrases about your topic.

Whole Group/Individual

- Teachers apply the strategy to their own writing

2:30 – 2:50

- Break

2:50 – 3:30 Michelle

Whole Group/ Individual

- Writing time—quick-write regarding personal collections

Inspired from a quote, "So if you would, explore that idea of collecting. Was it forced upon you or did you choose this collection?"

Small Group/Table share

- Teachers share their entries

Whole Group/Individual

- Read the interview with Albert Goldbarth from poetryfoundation.org
- Use after-reading strategy of "Save the Last Word for Me" to prepare for discussion

Small Group/Groups of four

- Discuss the article

3:30

Whole Group/Individual Response

- Closing Reflection

"What is one idea you can use in your classroom?"

Homework:

- Bomer, K. (2005). Answering test prompts by drawing on the best memoir writing. In *Writing a life: Teaching memoir to sharpen insight, shape meaning, and triumph over tests* (pp. 175 - 190). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ray, K. W. (2006). Selecting texts to anchor close study. In *Study driven: A framework for*

planning units of study in the writing workshop (pp. 95 - 108). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Day 2: Morning

8:30 – 8:50 Sara

Whole Group/Individual:

- Writing time—Opening reflection

"Write the word 'pebble' and then reflect on what we did yesterday and connect it to the word 'pebble.'

Whole group

- Share responses

8:50 – 9:30 Sara

Whole Group/Modeling

- Buckner—Strategy for expanding a topic—"Museum Exhibit."

Whole Group/Individual

- Teachers apply the strategy to their own writing

Whole Group

- Share responses

9:30 – 10:15 Sara

Whole Group/Individual

- Read/SSR—Fletcher, R. (1992). Introduction. In *What a writer needs* (pp. 1–8). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Reader Response—Choose one word that best represents the ideas in the text.

Small Group/Triads

- Teachers share their entries and discuss the text

Whole Group

- Teachers share the highlights from their small group discussions

10:15 – 10:30

- Break

10:30 – 11:00 Michelle

Whole Group/Interactive Lecture

- Buckner—Moving from notebooks to drafting

Whole Group/Individual

- Sustained Silent Writing—25 minutes

11:00 – 11:30 Michelle

Whole Group/Modeling & Individual

- Identifying themes/concepts in your personal writing
- Teachers reread and identify a concept(s)/theme(s) in their writing
- Draw on the information from the homework reading, Bomer, K. (2005). Answering test prompts by drawing on the best memoir writing. In *Writing a life: Teaching memoir to sharpen insight, shape meaning, and triumph over tests* (pp. 175-190). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

11:30 – 12:30 Lunch

Day 2: Afternoon

12:30 – 1:00 Sara
Whole Group/Modeling & Individual
- Buckner—Strategy for adding details—"Engaging in Inquiry."
- Teachers reread their pieces looking for something they can Google to find out more about it.

1:00 – 1:45
Whole Group/Individual
- Read/SSR—Fletcher, R. (1992). Freezing to the face. In *What a writer needs* (pp. 21-30). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Reader Response—Dialectic journal: "He said, I say."

Small Group/Groups of three and four
- Teachers share entries and discuss text

1:45 – 2:15 Michelle
Whole Group/Interactive Lecture
- Genre Studies—Presentation of information from the homework reading, Ray, K. W. (2006). Selecting texts to anchor close study. In *Study driven: A framework for planning units of study in the writing workshop* (pp. 95-108). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

2:15 – 2:30
- Break

2:30 – 3:00 Michelle
Whole Group/Modeling & Individual
- Buckner—Strategy to read like a writer—"Mapping the Text."
- Models the strategy using Soto, G. (1991). The pie. In *A summer life* (pp. 58-60). New York: Laurel Leaf.

Small Group/Groups of three and four
- Teachers share the language they underlined in the text—discussing writer's craft

Whole Group/Modeling
- Teachers share the highlights from their small group discussions

3:00 – 3:30 Sara and Michelle
Whole Group/Interactive Lecture
- Leads and Conclusions

Small Group/pairs or triads
- Game—matching leads and conclusions from published works.

Homework:
- Dunn, P., & Lindblom, K. (2003). Why revitalize grammar. *English Journal, 92*, 43-50.

Reader Response:
Four A's Text Protocol
- Groups formed and assigned an "A" task
    - Assumptions
    - Agree
    - Argue
    - Aspire

Day 3: Morning

8:30 - 9:15 Michelle
Whole Group/Individual
- Writing time—Opening reflection

"Think about a reluctant writer and/or reader that you had as a student last year. What strategies or ideas from this week might have been beneficial for that student?"

Small Group/Table share
- Teachers share their responses

Whole Group
- Share responses

9:15 – 9:45 Michelle
Small Group/Pairs and Triads
- Completes the Leads and Conclusions game

Whole Group/Interactive Lecture
- Debriefing

9:45 – 10:15 Sara
Whole Group/Modeling & Individual
- Buckner—Strategy for revising leads—"Try 10."
- Teachers apply the strategy to their own writing

Whole Group
- Teachers share their new leads

10:15 – 10:30
- Break

10:30 – 11:30 Michelle
Whole Group/Modeling
- Buckner—Read to write strategy, "Poetry Pass."

Small Group/Pairs and Triads
- Teachers participate in the "Poetry Pass."
- Models strategy using three poems by e.e.cummings—locate at least three stylistic moves
- Read and "map the text" by writing down what you notice about the way the author's style…then pass to your partner
- Discuss the comments as a group

Whole Group/Modeling
- Teachers share their findings
- Debrief the strategy

11:30 – 12:30
- Lunch

Homework:
- Fletcher, R. (2006). Failure to thrive. In *Boy writers: Reclaiming their voices* (pp. 11-15). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Fletcher, R. (2006). Help wanted: Writing genres that appeal to boys. In *Boy writers: Reclaiming*

their voices (pp. 133-140). Portland, ME: Stenhouse

- Reader Response:
  Write down three things that would change your practice and/or understanding of boy writers.

Day 3: Afternoon

12:30 – 1:30 Sara

Whole Group/Interactive Lecture

- Buckner—Strategy for genre study—"Anchor Charts" for expectations of genres.

Whole Group/Modeling & Individual

- Buckner—Strategy for writing in a variety of genres—"Genre Switch."
- Teachers apply the strategy of writing about their topic in different genres—police report, fairy tale, poetry…

Whole Group

- Teachers share their writing

1:30 – 2:30 Michelle

Small Group/Groups of four

- Discussion of the article they read for homework, Dunn, P., & Lindblom, K. (2003). Why revitalize grammar. *English Journal, 92*, 43-50.
- Same "A's" meet and discuss the text
- Regroup to form groups with a representative of each "A."

Whole Group

- Debriefing the use of the strategy
- Teachers share the highlights from their small group discussions

2:30 – 2:45

- Break

2:45 – 3:15 Michelle and Sara

Whole Group/Individual

- Models how punctuation can change the meaning of a message.
- Teachers read two versions of a "Dear John" letter noting the difference in meaning
- Teachers share their observations

Whole Group/Interactive Lecture

- Read Aloud:
  - Pulver, R. (2004). *Punctuation takes a vacation*. New York: Holiday House.
  - Truss, L. (2006). *Eats, shoots, and leaves: Why, commas really do make a difference!* New York: Putnam Juvenile.

3:15 – 3:30 Sara and Michelle

Whole Group/Lecture

- Spelling

Homework:

- Johnston, P. H. (2004). Agency and becoming strategic. In *Choice words* (pp. 29-42). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Johnston, P. H. (2004). Knowing. In *Choice words* (pp. 53-63). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Reader Response:
  Record any questions that come to your mind OR put a question mark by the passage.

Day 4: Morning

8:45 – 9:15 Sara
Whole Group/Individual

- Writing time—Opening reflection

"Select a word from this list of nouns and write about how this word connects with your writing process. It can your process in the classroom or your personal process."

Whole Group

- Share responses

9:15 – 10:00 Sara
Small Group/Groups of three and four

- Boy Writers—Share their responses and discuss the chapters they read for homework—

  Fletcher, R. (2006). Failure to thrive. In *Boy writers: Reclaiming their voices* (pp. 11-15). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

  Fletcher, R. (2006). Help wanted: Writing genres that appeal to boys. In *Boy writers: Reclaiming their voices* (pp. 133-140). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Whole Group

- Teachers share the highlights from their small group discussions

10:00 – 12:00 Michelle
Whole Group/Interactive Lecture

- Break-out sessions secondary
- Topic: Organizing for Writing Workshop in a Secondary Classroom

12:00 – 1:00

- Lunch

Day 4: Afternoon

1:00 – 2:00 Michelle
Small Group/Groups of three and four

- Silent Discussion of the two chapters by Johnston they read for homework—

  Johnston, P. H. (2004). Agency and becoming strategic. In *Choice words* (pp. 29-42). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

  Johnston, P. H. (2004). Knowing. In *Choice words* (pp. 53-63). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

- Oral discussion of the ideas that individuals wrote about in the silent discussion.

Whole Group

- Teachers share the highlights from their small group discussions

2:00 – 2:15

- Break

2:15 – 3:00 Sara
Whole Group/Interactive Lecture

- Buckner—Assessing the notebook

3:00 – 3:30 Michelle
Whole Group/Individual Response

- Writing time: Closing reflection

  "What do you envision for the coming school year? What are your hopes? Concerns? Questions?

Appendix C

Classroom Interview and Observation Schedule

October 2007				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
29	**30**	**31** Bree's 1st Interview		

November 2007				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
			1 Sheila' 1st Interview	**2**
5	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
12 Britney's 1st Interview	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**

December 2007				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
3	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7** Sheila/Observe Bree/Observe
10 Sheila/Observe Bree/Observe	**11** Britney/Observe	**12** Bree/Observe	**13**	**14** Sheila/Observe Britney/Observe
17	**18** Britney/Observe	**19**	**20**	**21**

January 2008				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
7 Britney/Observe	**8** Britney/Observe	**9**	**10**	**11** Britney/Observe
14	**15**	**16** Britney/Observe	**17**	**18** Britney/Observe
21	**22**	**23** Bree/Observe	**24**	**25** Britney 2nd Interview Bree/Observe
28 Bree/Observe	**29**	**30** Bree/Observe	**31**	

February 2008				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
				1
4 Bree/Observe Sheila/Observe	**5**	**6** Sheila/Observe	**7**	**8** Sheila/Observe
11 Sheila/Observe	**12**	**13** Sheila/Observe	**14**	**15** Sheila/Observe
18 Britney/Observe	**19**	**20** Britney/Observe Bree/Observe	**21**	**22** Britney/Observe Bree 2nd Interview
25 Britney/Observe Bree/Observe	**26**	**27** Britney/Observe Bree/Observe	**28**	**29** Britney/Observe

March 2008				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
3 Britney/Observe Bree/Observe	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7** Britney/Observe Bree/Observe
10 Bree/Observe	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**
17 Spring Break	**18** →	**19**	**20**	**21**
24	**25**	**26** Sheila/Observe & 2nd Interview	**27**	**28** Sheila/Observe
31 Sheila/Observe				

April 2008				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4** Sheila/Observe
5	**6**	**7** Sheila/Observe	**8**	**9**
12	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**
19	**20**	**21** Sheila/Observe		

May 2008				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
26	**27**	**28** Britney & Bree 3rd Interview	29	30 Sheila 3rd Interview

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Vita

Lynn Ashman Masterson was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1954. She attended high school at St. Joseph's Academy, St. Louis, Missouri, graduating in 1972. Afterward, she entered Fontbonne College in St. Louis. After moving to Texas in 1975, she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Visual Arts at The University of Texas at Dallas in December of 1976. Her teaching career began in 1979 and included positions as a second grade teacher at St. John's Episcopal Day School in Odessa, Texas and an elementary art teacher for Ector County Independent School District. Upon relocating to Central Texas, her teaching positions included first grade and middle school language arts in Georgetown Independent School District, and middle school language arts in Leander Independent School District. While teaching, she entered The University of Texas at Austin and completed her Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction in August of 1997. After this time, Lynn worked as a Secondary Language Arts Specialist for the Austin Independent School District. In June of 2004, she returned to The University of Texas at Austin as a doctoral student in Language and Literacy Studies. During her program, Lynn served as a Co-Director for the Heart of Texas Writing Project, as well as an Assistant Instructor. She is currently a Lecturer at Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

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This dissertation was typed by the author.